

THE MOVEMENT OF RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

Emerging field and dynamic force

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As many United Nations (UN) reports attest, we humans are destroying the life-support systems of the Earth at an alarming rate. Ecosystems are being degraded by rapid industrialization and relentless development. The data keeps pouring in that we are altering the climate and toxifying the air, water, and soil of the planet so that the health of humans and other species is at risk. Indeed, the Swedish scientist, Johan Rockstrom, and his colleagues, are examining which planetary boundaries are being exceeded (Rockstrom and Klum, 2015).

The explosion of population from 3 billion in 1960 to more than 7 billion currently and the subsequent demands on the natural world seem to be on an unsustainable course. The demands include meeting basic human needs of a majority of the world's people, but also feeding the insatiable desire for goods and comfort spread by the allure of materialism. The first is often called sustainable development; the second is unsustainable consumption. The challenge of rapid economic growth and consumption has brought on destabilizing climate change. This is coming into full focus in alarming ways including increased floods and hurricanes, droughts and famine, rising seas and warming oceans.

Can we turn our course to avert disaster? There are several indications that this may still be possible. On September 25, 2015 after the Pope addressed the UN General Assembly, 195 member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On December 12, 2015 these same members states endorsed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Both of these are important indications of potential reversal. The Climate Agreement emerged from the dedicated work of governments and civil society along with business partners. The leadership of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres, and many others was indispensable.

One of the inspirations for the Climate Agreement and for the adoption of the SDGs was the release of the Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in June 2015. The encyclical encouraged the moral forces of concern for both the environment and people to be joined in "integral ecology". "The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor" are now linked as was not fully visible before (Boff, 1997 and in the encyclical). Many religious and environmental communities are embracing this integrated perspective and will, no doubt, foster it going forward. The question is how can the world religions contribute more effectively to this renewed ethical momentum for change. For example, what will be their long-term response to population growth? We will not address this question here. Instead, we will consider some of the challenges and possibilities amid the dream of progress and the lure of consumption.

Challenges: The dream of progress and the religion of consumption

Consumption appears to have become an ideology or quasi-religion, not only in the West but also around the world. Faith in economic growth drives both producers and consumers. The dream of

progress is becoming a distorted one. This convergence of our unlimited demands with an unquestioned faith in economic progress raises questions about the roles of religions in encouraging, discouraging, or ignoring our dominant drive toward appropriately satisfying material needs or inappropriately indulging material desires. Integral ecology supports the former and critiques the latter.

Moreover, a consumerist ideology depends upon and simultaneously contributes to a world-view based on the instrumental rationality of the human. That is, the assumption for decision-making is that all choices are equally clear and measurable. Market-based metrics such as price, utility, or efficiency are dominant. This can result in utilitarian views of a forest as so much board feet or simply as a mechanistic complex of ecosystems that provide services to the human.

One long-term effect of this is that the individual human decision-maker is further distanced from nature because nature is reduced to measurable entities for profit or use. From this perspective we humans may be isolated in our perceived uniqueness as something apart from the biological web of life. In this context, humans do not seek identity and meaning in the numinous beauty of the world, nor do they experience themselves as dependent on a complex of life-supporting interactions of air, water, and soil. Rather, this logic sees humans as independent, rational decision-makers who find their meaning and identity in systems of management that now attempt to co-opt the language of conservation and environmental concern. Happiness is derived from simply creating and having more material goods. This perspective reflects a reading of our current geological period as human induced by our growth as a species that is now controlling the planet. This current era is being called the “Anthropocene” because of our effect on the planet in contrast to the prior 12,000 year epoch known as the Holocene.

This human capacity to imagine and implement a utilitarian-based worldview regarding nature has undermined many of the ancient insights of the world’s religious and spiritual traditions. For example, some religions, attracted by the individualistic orientations of market rationalism and short-term benefits of social improvement, seized upon material accumulation as containing divine sanction. Thus, Max Weber identified the rise of Protestantism with an ethos of inspired work and accumulated capital.

Weber also identified the growing disenchantment from the world of nature with the rise of global capitalism. Karl Marx recognized the “metabolic rift” in which human labor and nature become alienated from cycles of renewal. The earlier mystique of creation was lost. Wonder, beauty, and imagination as ways of knowing were gradually superseded by the analytical reductionism of modernity, such that technological and economic entrenchment have become major inspirations of progress.

Challenges: Religions fostering anthropocentrism

This modern, instrumental view of matter as primarily for human use arises in part from a dualistic Western philosophical view of mind and matter. Adapted into Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious perspectives, this dualism associates mind with the soul as a transcendent spiritual entity given sovereignty and dominion over matter. Mind is often valued primarily for its rationality in contrast to a lifeless world. At the same time we ensure our radical discontinuity from it.

Interestingly, views of the uniqueness of the human bring many traditional religious perspectives

into sync with modern instrumental rationalism. In Western religious traditions, for example, the human is seen as an exclusively gifted creature with a transcendent soul that manifests the divine image and likeness. Consequently, this soul should be liberated from the material world. In many contemporary reductionist perspectives (philosophical and scientific) the human with rational mind and technical prowess stands as the pinnacle of evolution. Ironically, religions emphasizing the uniqueness of the human as the image of God meet market-driven applied science and technology precisely at this point of the special nature of the human to justify exploitation of the natural world. Anthropocentrism in various forms, religious, philosophical, scientific, and economic, has led, perhaps inadvertently, to the dominance of humans in this modern period, now called the Anthropocene. (It can be said that certain strands of the South Asian religions have emphasized the importance of humans escaping from nature into transcendent liberation. However, such forms of radical dualism are not central to the East Asian traditions or indigenous traditions.)

From the standpoint of rational analysis, many values embedded in religions, such as a sense of the sacred, the intrinsic value of place, the spiritual dimension of the human, moral concern for nature, and care for future generations, are incommensurate with an objectified monetized worldview as they not quantifiable. Thus, they are often ignored as externalities, or overridden by more pragmatic profit-driven considerations. Contemporary nation-states in league with transnational corporations have seized upon this individualistic, property-based, use-analysis to promote national sovereignty, security, and development exclusively for humans.

Possibilities: systems science

Yet, even within the realm of so-called scientific, rational thought, there is not a uniform approach. Resistance to the easy marriage of reductionist science and instrumental rationality comes from what is called systems science and new ecology. By this we refer to a movement within empirical, experimental science of exploring the interaction of nature and society as complex dynamic systems. This approach stresses both analysis and synthesis – the empirical act of observation – as well as placement of the focus of study within the context of a larger whole. Systems science resists the temptation to take the micro, empirical, reductive act as the complete description of a thing, but opens analysis to the large interactive web of life to which we belong, from ecosystems to the biosphere. There are numerous examples of this holistic perspective in various branches of ecology. And this includes overcoming the nature–human divide (Schmitz 2016). Aldo Leopold understood this holistic interconnection well when he wrote: “We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” (Leopold, 1966)

Collaboration of science and religion

Within this inclusive framework, scientists have been moving for some time beyond simply distanced observations to engaged concern. The Pope’s encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, has elevated the level of visibility and efficacy of this conversation between science and religion as perhaps never before on a global level. Similarly, many other statements from the world religions are linking the wellbeing of people and the planet for a flourishing future. For example, the World Council of Churches has been working for four decades to join humans and nature in their program on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation.

Many scientists such as Thomas Lovejoy, E. O. Wilson, Jane Lubchenco, Peter Raven, and Ursula

Goodenough recognize the importance of religious and cultural values when discussing solutions to environmental challenges. Other scientists such as Paul Ehrlich and Donald Kennedy have called for major studies of human behavior and values in relation to environmental matters (Ehrlich and Kennedy, 2005). This has morphed into the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere (mahb.stanford.edu). Since 2009 the Ecological Society of America has established an Earth Stewardship Initiative with yearly panels and publications. Many environmental studies programs are now seeking to incorporate these broader ethical and behavioral approaches into the curriculum.

Possibilities: Extinction and religious response

The stakes are high, however, and the path toward limiting ourselves within planetary boundaries is not smooth. Scientists are now reporting that because of the population explosion, our consuming habits, and our market drive for resources, we are living in the midst of a mass extinction period. This period represents the largest loss of species since the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago when the Cenozoic period began. In other words, we are shutting down life systems on the planet and causing the end of this large-scale geological era with little awareness of what we are doing or its consequences.

As the cultural historian Thomas Berry observed some years ago, we are making macrophase changes on the planet with microphase wisdom. Indeed, some people worry that these rapid changes have outstripped the capacity of our religions, ethics, and spiritualities to meet the complex challenges we are facing.

The question arises whether the wisdom traditions of the human community, embedded in institutional religions and beyond, can embrace integral ecology at the level needed? Can the religions provide leadership into a synergistic era of human–Earth relations characterized by empathy, regeneration, and resilience? Or are religions themselves the wellspring of those exclusivist perspectives in which human societies disconnect themselves from other groups and from the natural world? Are religions caught in their own meditative promises of transcendent peace and redemptive bliss in paradisaic abandon? Or does their drive for exclusive salvation or truth claims cause them to try to overcome or convert the Other?

Many people are exploring these topics within religious and spiritual communities regarding the appropriate responses of the human to our multiple environmental and social challenges. What forms of symbolic visioning and ethical imagining can call forth a transformation of consciousness and conscience for our Earth community? Can religions and spiritualities provide vision and inspiration for grounding and guiding mutually enhancing human–Earth relations? Have we arrived at a point where we realize that more scientific statistics on environmental problems, more legislation, policy or regulation, and more economic analysis, while necessary, are no longer sufficient for the large-scale social transformations needed? This is where the world religions, despite their limitations, surely have something to contribute.

Such a perspective includes ethics, practices, and spiritualities from the world's cultures that may or may not be connected with institutional forms of religion. Thus spiritual ecology and nature religions are an important part of the discussions. Our own efforts have focused on the world religions and indigenous traditions. Our decade-long training in graduate school and our years of living and traveling throughout Asia and the West gave us an early appreciation for religions as dynamic, diverse, living traditions. We are keenly aware of the multiple forms of syncretism and

hybridization in the world religions and spiritualities. We have witnessed how they are far from monolithic or impervious to change in our travels to more than 60 countries.

Problems and promise of religions

Several qualifications regarding the various roles of religion should thus be noted. First, we do not wish to suggest here that any one religious tradition has a privileged ecological perspective. Rather, multiple interreligious perspectives may be the most helpful in identifying the contributions of the world religions to the flourishing of life.

We also acknowledge that there is frequently a disjunction between principles and practices: ecologically sensitive ideas in religions are not always evident in environmental practices in particular civilizations. Many civilizations have overused their environments, with or without religious sanction.

Finally, we are keenly aware that religions have all too frequently contributed to tensions and conflict among various groups, both historically and at present. Dogmatic rigidity, inflexible claims of truth, and misuse of institutional and communal power by religions have led to tragic consequences in many parts of the globe.

Nonetheless, while religions have often preserved traditional ways, they have also provoked social change. They can be limiting but also liberating in their outlooks. In the twentieth century, for example, religious leaders and theologians helped to give birth to progressive movements such as civil rights for minorities, social justice for the poor, and liberation for women. Although the world religions have been slow to respond to our current environmental crises, their moral authority and their institutional power may help effect a change in attitudes, practices, and public policies. Now the challenge is a broadening of their ethical perspectives.

Traditionally the religions developed ethics for homicide, suicide, and genocide. Currently they need to respond to biocide, ecocide, and geocide. (Berry, 2009)

Retrieval, reevaluation, reconstruction

There is an inevitable disjunction between the examination of historical religious traditions in all of their diversity and complexity and the application of teachings, ethics, or practices to contemporary situations. While religions have always been involved in meeting contemporary challenges over the centuries, it is clear that the global environmental crisis is larger and more complex than anything in recorded human history. Thus, a simple application of traditional ideas to contemporary problems is unlikely to be either possible or adequate. In order to address ecological problems properly, religious and spiritual leaders, laypersons, and academics have to be in dialogue with scientists, environmentalists, economists, businesspeople, politicians, and educators.

With these qualifications in mind we can then identify three methodological approaches that appear in the still emerging study of religion and ecology. These are retrieval, reevaluation, and reconstruction. Retrieval involves the scholarly investigation of scriptural and commentarial sources in order to clarify religious perspectives regarding human–Earth relations. This requires that historical and textual studies uncover resources latent within the tradition. In addition, retrieval can identify ethical codes and ritual customs of the tradition in order to discover how these teachings were put into practice. Traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) is an important part of this for

all the world religions, especially indigenous traditions.

With reevaluation, traditional teachings are evaluated with regard to their relevance to contemporary circumstances. Are the ideas, teachings, or ethics present in these traditions appropriate for shaping more ecologically sensitive attitudes and sustainable practices? Reevaluation also questions ideas that may lead to inappropriate environmental practices. For example, are certain religious tendencies reflective of otherworldly or world-denying orientations that are not helpful in relation to pressing ecological issues? It asks as well whether the material world of nature has been devalued by a particular religion and whether a model of ethics focusing solely on human interactions is adequate to address environmental problems.

Finally, reconstruction suggests ways that religious traditions might adapt their teachings to current circumstances in new and creative ways. These may result in new syntheses or in creative modifications of traditional ideas and practices to suit modern modes of expression. This is the most challenging aspect of the emerging field of religion and ecology and requires sensitivity to who is speaking about a tradition in the process of reevaluation and reconstruction. Postcolonial critics have appropriately highlighted the complex issues surrounding the problem of who is representing or interpreting a religious tradition or even what constitutes that tradition. Nonetheless, practitioners and leaders of particular religions are finding grounds for creative dialogue with scholars of religions in these various phases of interpretation.

Religious ecologies and religious cosmologies

As part of the retrieval, reevaluation, and reconstruction of religions we would identify “religious ecologies” and “religious cosmologies” as ways that religions have functioned in the past and can still function at present. Religious ecologies are ways of orienting and grounding whereby humans undertake specific practices of nurturing and transforming self and community in a particular cosmological context that regards nature as inherently valuable. Through cosmological stories, humans narrate and experience the larger matrix of mystery in which life arises, unfolds, and flourishes. These are what we call religious cosmologies. These two, namely religious ecologies and religious cosmologies, can be distinguished but not separated. Together they provide a context for navigating life’s challenges and affirming the rich spiritual value of human–Earth relations.

Human communities until the modern period sensed themselves as grounded in and dependent on the natural world. Thus, even when the forces of nature were overwhelming, the regenerative capacity of the natural world opened a way forward. Humans experienced the processes of the natural world as interrelated, both practically and symbolically. These understandings were expressed in TEK, namely, in hunting and agricultural practices, such as the appropriate use of plants, animals, and land. Such knowledge was integrated in symbolic language and practical norms, such as prohibitions, taboos, and limitations on ecosystems’ usage. All this was based in an understanding of nature as the source of nurturance and kinship. The Lakota people still speak of “all my relations” as an expression of this kinship. Such perspectives will need to be incorporated into strategies to solve environmental problems. Humans are part of nature and their cultural and religious values are critical dimensions of the discussion.

Multidisciplinary approaches: Environmental humanities

We are recognizing, then, that the environmental crisis is multifaceted and requires multidisciplinary

approaches. As this book indicates, the insights of scientific modes of analytical and synthetic knowing are indispensable for understanding and responding to our contemporary environmental crisis. So also, we need new technologies, such as industrial ecology, green chemistry, and renewable energy. Clearly ecological economics is critical along with green governance and legal policies.

In this context it is important to recognize different ways of knowing that are manifest in the humanities, such as artistic expressions, historical perspectives, philosophical inquiry, and religious understandings. These honor emotional intelligence, affective insight, ethical valuing, and spiritual awakening.

Environmental humanities is a growing and diverse area of study within humanistic disciplines. In the last several decades, new academic courses and programs, research journals, and monographs, have blossomed. This broad-based inquiry has sparked creative investigation into multiple ways, historically and at present, of understanding and interacting with nature, constructing cultures, developing communities, raising food, and exchanging goods.

It is helpful to see the field of religion and ecology as part of this larger emergence of environmental humanities. While it can be said that environmental history, literature, and philosophy are some four decades old, the field of religion and ecology began some two decades ago. It was preceded, however, by work among various scholars, particularly Christian theologians. Some ecofeminist theologians, such as Rosemary Ruether and Sallie McFague, Mary Daly, and Ivone Gebara led the way.

The emerging field of religion and ecology

An effort to identify and to map religiously diverse attitudes and practices toward nature was the focus of a three-year international conference series on world religions and ecology. Organized by us with other religious scholars, ten conferences were held at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions from 1996 to 1998 that resulted in a ten volume book series (1997–2004). Over 800 scholars of religion and environmentalists participated. The Director of the Center, Larry Sullivan, gave space and staff for the conferences. He chose to limit their scope to the world religions and indigenous religions rather than “nature religions”, such as wicca or paganism, which the organizers had hoped to include.

Culminating conferences were held in Fall 1998 at Harvard and in New York at the UN and the American Museum of Natural History where 1,000 people attended and Bill Moyers presided. At the UN conference we founded the Forum on Religion and Ecology, which is now located at Yale. We organized a dozen more conferences and created an electronic newsletter that is now sent to over 12,000 people around the world. In addition, we developed a major website for research, education, and outreach in this area (fore.yale.edu). The conferences, books, website, and newsletter have assisted in the emergence of a new field of study in religion and ecology. Many people have helped in this process including Whitney Bauman and Sam Mickey who are now moving the field toward discussing the need for planetary ethics. A Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology was established in 2002, a European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment was formed in 2005, and a Forum on Religion and Ecology at Monash University in Australia in 2011.

Courses on this topic are now offered in numerous colleges and universities across North America and in other parts of the world. A Green Seminary Initiative has arisen to help educate seminarians.

Within the American Academy of Religion there is a vibrant group focused on scholarship and teaching in this area. A peer-reviewed journal, *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, is celebrating its twenty-fifth year of publication. Another journal has been publishing since 2007, the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*. A two volume *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, edited by Bron Taylor, has helped shape the discussions, as has the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture he founded. Clearly this broad field of study will continue to expand as the environmental crisis grows in complexity and requires increasingly creative interdisciplinary responses.

The work in religion and ecology rests in an intersection between the academic field within education and the dynamic force within society. This is why we see our work not so much as activist, but rather as “engaged scholarship” for the flourishing of our shared planetary life. This is part of a broader integration taking place to link concerns for both people and the planet. This has been fostered in part by the twenty-volume Ecology and Justice Series from Orbis Books and with the work of John Cobb, Larry Rasmussen, Dieter Hessel, Heather Eaton, Cynthia Moe-Loeboda, and others. The Papal Encyclical is now highlighting this linkage of ecojustice as indispensable for an integral ecology.

The dynamic force of religious environmentalism

All of these religious traditions, then, are groping to find the languages, symbols, rituals, and ethics for sustaining both ecosystems and humans. Clearly there are obstacles to religions moving into their ecological, ecojustice, and planetary phases. The religions are themselves challenged by their own bilingual languages, namely, their languages of transcendence, enlightenment, and salvation; and their languages of immanence, sacredness of Earth, and respect for nature. Yet, as the field of religion and ecology has developed within academia, so has the force of religious environmentalism emerged around the planet. Roger Gottlieb documents this in his book *A Greener Faith* (Gottlieb 2006). The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew held international symposia on “Religion, Science and the Environment” focused on water issues (1995–2009) that we attended. He has made influential statements on this subject for 20 years. The Parliament of World Religions has included panels on this topic since 1998 and most expansively in 2015. Since 1995 the UK-based Alliance of Religion and Conservation (ARC), led by Martin Palmer, has been doing significant work with religious communities under the patronage of Prince Philip.

These efforts are recovering a sense of place, which is especially clear in the environmental resilience and regeneration practices of indigenous peoples. It is also evident in valuing the sacred pilgrimage places in the Abrahamic traditions (Jerusalem, Rome, and Mecca) both historically and now ecologically. So also the attention to sacred mountains, caves, and other pilgrimage sites stands in marked contrast to massive pollution in East Asia and South Asia.

In many settings around the world, religious practitioners are drawing together religious ways of respecting place, land, and life with understanding of environmental science and the needs of local communities. There have been official letters by Catholic Bishops in the Philippines and in Alberta, Canada alarmed by the oppressive social conditions and ecological disasters caused by extractive industries. Catholic nuns and laity in North America, Australia, England, and Ireland sponsor educational programs and conservation plans drawing on the ecospiritual vision of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. Also inspired by Berry and Swimme, Paul Winter’s Solstice celebrations and Earth Mass at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City have been taking place for

three decades.

Even in the industrial growth that grips China, there are calls from many in politics, academia, and NGOs to draw on Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist perspectives for environmental change. In 2008 we met with Pan Yue, the Deputy Minister of the Environment, who has studied these traditions and sees them as critical to Chinese environmental ethics. In India, Hinduism is faced with the challenge of clean up of sacred rivers, such as the Ganges and the Yamuna. To this end in 2010 with Hindu scholars, David Haberman and Christopher Chapple, we organized a conference of scientists and religious leaders in Delhi and Vrindavan to address the pollution of the Yamuna.

Many religious groups are focused on climate change and energy issues. For example, InterFaith Power and Light and Green Faith are encouraging religious communities to reduce their carbon footprint. Earth Ministry in Seattle is leading protests against oil pipelines and terminals. The Evangelical Environmental Network and other denominations are emphasizing climate change as a moral issue that is disproportionately affecting the poor. In Canada and the US the Indigenous Environmental Network is speaking out regarding damage caused by resource extraction, pipelines, and dumping on First Peoples' Reserves and beyond. All of the religions now have statements on climate change as a moral issue and they were strongly represented in the People's Climate March in September 2014. *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, published the first collection of articles on religion and climate change from two conferences we organized there (Tucker and Grim, 2001).

Striking examples of religion and ecology have occurred in the Islamic world. In June 2001, May 2005, and April 2016 the Islamic Republic of Iran led by Presidents Khatami and Rouhani and the UN Environment Programme sponsored conferences in Tehran that we attended. They were focused on Islamic principles and practices for environmental protection. The Iranian Constitution identifies Islamic values for ecology and threatens legal sanctions. One of the earliest spokespersons for religion and ecology is the Iranian scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Fazlun Khalid in the UK founded the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science. In Indonesia in 2014 a *fatwa* was issued declaring that killing an endangered species is prohibited.

These examples illustrate ways in which an emerging alliance of religion and ecology is occurring around the planet. These traditional values within the religions now cause them to awaken to environmental crises in ways that are strikingly different from science or policy. But they may find interdisciplinary ground for dialogue in concerns for ecojustice, sustainability, and cultural motivations for transformation. The difficulty, of course, is that the religions are often preoccupied with narrow sectarian interests. However, many people, including the Pope, are calling on the religions to go beyond these interests and become a moral haven for change.

Renewal through *Laudato Si'*

Pope Francis is highlighting an integral ecology that brings together concern for humans and the Earth. He makes it clear that the environment can no longer be seen as only an issue for scientific experts, or environmental groups, or government agencies alone. Rather, he invites all people, programs and institutions to realize these are complicated environmental and social problems that require integrated solutions beyond a "technocratic paradigm" that values an easy fix. Within this integrated framework, he urges bold new solutions.

In this context Francis suggests that ecology, economics, and equity are intertwined. Healthy ecosystems depend on a just economy that results in equity. Endangering ecosystems with an exploitative economic system is causing immense human suffering and inequity. In particular, the poor and most vulnerable are threatened by climate change, although they are not the major cause of the climate problem. He acknowledges the need for believers and nonbelievers alike to help renew the vitality of Earth's ecosystems and expand systemic efforts for equity.

In short, he is calling for “ecological conversion” from within all the world religions. He is making visible an emerging worldwide phenomenon of the force of religious environmentalism on the ground, as well as the field of religion and ecology in academia developing new ecotheologies and ecojustice ethics. This diverse movement is evoking a change of mind and heart, consciousness, and conscience. Its expression will be seen more fully in the years to come.

Conclusion

The challenge of the contemporary call for ecological renewal cannot be ignored by the religions. Nor can it be answered simply from out of doctrine, dogma, scripture, devotion, ritual, belief, or prayer. It cannot be addressed by any of these well-trodden paths of religious expression alone. Yet, like so much of our human cultures and institutions the religions are necessary for our way forward yet not sufficient in themselves for the transformation needed. The roles of the religions cannot be exported from outside their horizons. Thus, the individual religions must explain and transform themselves if they are willing to enter into this period of environmental engagement that is upon us. If the religions can participate in this creativity they may again empower humans to embrace values that sustain life and contribute to a vibrant Earth community.

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