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The Pastoral Challenge of the Environmental Crisis: Environmental Anxiety and Lutheran “Eco-Reformation”

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Abstract

Plans for a Lutheran “Eco-Reformation” are complicated by the polarization of views related to environmental issues. I argue that there is a special reason to take the agenda of Eco-Reformation seriously: a widespread and often unconscious environmental anxiety, which posits a pastoral and existential challenge which must be addressed by the churches. I contextualize the challenge of Eco-Reformation in the historical context of Lutheran ecotheology. Finally, I briefly discuss two key themes for Lutheran ecotheology: God’s presence in nature and the theology of the cross.

Eco-Reformation and the Problem of Polarization

Prominent Lutheran theologians have called for an “Eco-Reformation” at the time of the forthcoming Reformation Jubilee year of 2017. They perceive that the world’s ecosystems are in grave danger because of human action. There are many reasons for use of the term reformation in relation to this. First, the situation affects people and eco-systems in a very wide manner, pointing to the need for large changes. Second, in order for the changes to happen, attitudes and behavior must change radically on both personal and socio-political levels. A *metanoia*, a deep change of mind is needed, as was in the time of the Protestant Reformation.¹

The severity of the global environmental crisis certainly needs a strong response. However, the polarized situation concerning environmental matters makes it challenging to use any term beginning with the prefix “eco-“. Especially in the United States, communication about “eco-theology” must be carefully thought out. Christian thought and action related to the environment has grown into a major phenomenon.² Different names have been used of this kind of activity. Currently, one of the most prominent international terms is “ecotheology”, which is often used as a

shorter version of “ecological theology”. Other options include “theology of nature”, “theology of creation”, “Christian environmental ethics” and more practice-related terms such as “earthkeeping” and “creation care”. I have argued that for a more academic term, ecotheology or ecological theology is slightly better than the rest. It does not reduce the matter into a subfield in theology, at least not as strongly as some other terms do. In addition, many of the other terms mentioned above have special connotations related to other theological questions, such as the nature of the universe or the act of creation.³

Ecotheology is a challenging term, however. Environmental issues have been a strongly debated theme in public discussions. In many countries polarization has appeared between proponents of different views. Those who share values related to environmental protection gladly cherish terms and images related to environment and ecology. And on the opposite, others tend to resist and bypass anything which seems to fall into that category. The situation is especially difficult in the United States, where political polarization is linked with polarization regarding environmental issues. Economic and other interests play a role, as does psychology. For example, there are various reasons for climate change denial, ranging from conscious economic choices to unconscious mechanisms for the survival of the integrity of the psyche.⁴

Thus, when prominent Lutheran theologians call for an “Eco-Reformation”, my fear is that many people will simply situate the idea into a category of “environmental matters”, which belongs to “environmental people”. This may happen due to polarization or to a desire to have somebody else deal with issues that are considered to be part of their expertise, not one’s own. The situation is difficult. On one hand, we should be able to resist the phenomenon where environmental issues are externalized. The problems are so vast that they require the attention of numerous people and institutions. On the other hand, it seems inevitable that social change requires a certain group of people who act as proponents of an idea or ideology.⁵

One conceptual framework for this is the use of the term “identity politics”. In a social process, there is a faction with which an ideology is identified. This faction seeks to gain support for their ideology from members of the larger group. For this process, theories of recognition may be applied: the faction is seeking recognition for itself or for its agenda. In a process of this kind, those who oppose an agenda will tend to associate such an ecotheological group with negative aspects. As a result, an “ecological” group identity is positive for some and negative for others, and a power struggle ensues.⁶ In theory, many groups related to identity politics would be, ironically, seeking to

make themselves unnecessary in the end: for if the larger group would adhere to their issue, a separate group would not be needed anymore. This can be seen to be the aim of an “ecothological movement”: to make itself unnecessary by changing a church to have a desired set of environmental values, principles and methods of action. In practice, the situation is more complicated, for usually some results are reached, but not even nearly all of the desired changes are made.⁷

Changes in thought and action require bridge-building between opposing factions. The people who are situated by their opinion somewhere between the opposing groups often form the majority of the whole group. For them, a critical question is: how do the proposed agendas relate to their previous understanding? For Lutherans, the analysis of the Lutheran tradition is in a key position for this. I hold that proposals by theologians speaking on behalf of an Eco-Reformation are based on a realistic account of the global ecological situation. Further, I share the belief that the Lutheran tradition includes many resources which are crucially important in the situation. One important reason for taking the proposals of Eco-Reformation seriously is the anxiety generated by the global environmental crisis.

The pastoral challenge of environmental anxiety

In theological proposals for Christian environmental responsibility, Willis Jenkins argues that there are at least three different practical strategies from which to build. Environmental responsibility may be built on obeying God’s command such that moral agency is thus emphasized. This has been so far the most common type of Christian ecotheology and terminology related to stewardship has often been used of this. A second option is to emphasize the value of nature itself (or the rights of nature), and a third option is to emphasize interconnectedness between humans and the rest of nature, “ecological subjectivity” as Jenkins puts it.⁸

However, even if a person is not very keen about any one of the arguments, I argue that environmental matters simply cannot be bypassed anymore. In addition to the widespread damage to humans and ecosystems, environmental degradation is causing anxiety and influencing behavior in serious ways. Psychotherapists have noticed a new type of anxiety among their patients. Climate change is the overriding environmental issue of our time and it is related to numerous other environmental problems, which makes it nearly synonymous with “environmental issues” in general. This has caused the psychotherapists to speak of such terms as “climate anxiety” or even “climate neurosis”. The environmental behavior of a vast array of people can be seen as showing

psychological problems, because outer action is in contradiction with inner knowledge, beliefs and emotions. Often the conflict is unconscious, which results in the use of the term neurosis.⁹

One need not look, however, only to clinical care in order to notice this phenomenon. To a large extent, people especially in the industrialized countries tend to be pessimistic and anxious about the future of the world. Polls show that especially young people regard environmental damage as a major, often the major, cause of anxiety for them.¹⁰ The situation where there is a vast amount of very troubling information about the environmental conditions and changes in the world, and at the same time a very limited amount of available options (in people's minds, at least) to significantly affect the state of affairs, causes a strange and troubling collective atmosphere. A pioneering study by Kari Marie Norgaard, for instance, revealed how the people in a Norwegian village manage not to speak about climate change, even when they basically know the dangers and their own embeddedness with generating climate change. Group pressure requires that no-one should be a "spoilsport in public situations." Complicated processes of denial emerge and are collectively upheld.¹¹

The amount and role of environmental anxiety in the current world has begun to be discussed by theologians, but, in my view, it has not been given enough attention. It is a major factor shaping our lives and societies. Perhaps this is the very reason why it has been so little discussed: we don't see it, because we live through it. It has become part of our worldview. We are anxious and resort to various coping strategies. This is a significant existential and pastoral emergency. People are looking for ways to survive and sources of meaning. For Christians, this is a challenge and an opportunity. For the sake of the world, it is crucially important that Christian answers to the situation not be based on other-worldly escapes. In addition, it is terrible if the congregations use the situation in a solely utilitarian fashion, e.g. in order to gain more followers. Rather, Christians should offer such eschatological hope which includes both imminent action and hope in the coming reign of God. And that kind of hope I see as one of the fundamentals of Lutheran theology.¹²

The loss of symbolic immortality

Environmental anxiety is made more difficult – and important – to grasp because it has a strongly unconscious side in it. The insights of certain studies in environmental psychology are crucial for theological considerations. I am referring particularly to Shierry Nicholsen's striking book, *The Love of Nature and The End of the World*, which builds strongly on Harold Searles' pioneering work. Searles condenses the main argument in the following way.

Even beyond the threat of nuclear warfare, I think, the ecological crisis is the greatest threat mankind collectively has ever faced ... My hypothesis is that man [sic] is hampered in his meeting of this environmental crisis by a severe and pervasive apathy which is based largely upon feelings and attitudes of which he is unconscious.¹³

The American Lutheran theological ethicist Cynthia Moe-Lobeda has provided an important discussion of the various factors behind the “moral paralysis” of the people from industrialized countries: the situation where environmental action (and social action) is missing, even when people should know that such action would be highly necessary.¹⁴ The factors could be divided roughly into two groups: a) ones related to attitudes and actions that damage other people and Earth’s life systems and b) others related to a tragic situation where people are at the same time guilty and themselves victims. I’m focusing on the second category, that is, the tragic elements in the situation. The two categories cannot naturally be completely separated, but the existence of both aspects is important to note and to distinguish.

Moe-Lobeda also discusses briefly the unconscious reactions to the environmental crisis,¹⁵ but Searles and Nichol森 especially emphasize them. According to their view, people are traumatized. The shock of the information about the scale in which the natural environments are being destroyed is so strong that people do not want to think about the issue. The trauma threatens the whole belief about the goodness of the world. Something upon which people are dependent on is under threat. The combination of dependency and vulnerability makes the situation uniquely hard to bear.¹⁶

Put differently, people are losing a central means of meaning-making: beliefs about “symbolic immortality”, a term coined by psychologist Robert J. Lifton. Symbolic immortality can be divided into different aspects, each linked with a strategy of coping with mortality and death. People want their lives to have a continuing meaning even when they themselves are dead. In a fascinating manner, these hopes usually are strongly related to material ways of existence. The hope can be biological: people want that their children or other dear ones could live on, and that in a way they would live on in them. The hope can be religious or theological in a traditional sense, related to eternal life. The hope can be related to the legacy of the work or artistic creations of the people. And, crucially for our topic, the hope can be related to continued existence in relation to the natural world. People may have comfort in the fact that the ecosystems continue their flourishing and that their own bodies and actions continue as parts of a long process in nature.¹⁷

Now, Searles and Nichol森 argue, people are under threat of losing all these kinds of hopes for symbolic immortality because of the environmental crisis. Traditional religion had already fallen out of favor for numerous people from industrialized countries, but at least they had had other sources of hope. However, the environmental crisis threatens to make human living on the planet difficult if not impossible, or at least very troubling for their children and grandchildren. During the presumed global crisis, there is no guarantee that any legacy related to work or artistic creation would be long-lived.

And the world of nature is diminishing, too.¹⁸ In nature, people have seen both finitude and continuity. I believe this to be a reason for why seasons of nature are so therapeutic for mourning people: they remind that there is both death and new life.¹⁹ Now, with the environmental crisis, the image of death has become more final because there is not as much hope for the continuing of the ecosystems. Even the seasons themselves have been changed or almost destroyed, presumably because of human-caused climate change. In Nordic countries, for example, people are mourning for the loss of seasons: the warming is causing winter snow to become a rarity in many parts of the countries, and autumn and spring are profoundly affected also.²⁰

The Challenge for an Eco-Reformation and the History of Lutheran Ecotheology

To summarize my discussion so far: the environmental crisis has caused an existential and pastoral challenge, which is even deeper than many have feared. It has to be addressed by religions also, and it forms an important background for the need to have an Eco-Reformation.

The term Eco-Reformation has been used especially by several leading North American Lutheran ecotheologians. An important instrument for promoting Lutheran environmental responsibility has been the Lutherans Restoring Creation website and a related organization, Lutheran Earthkeeping Network of the Synods. The theme of Eco-Reformation has been promoted through the website by such scholars as David Rhoads, Barbara Rossing and Peter Bakken.²¹ The theme has foundations in Larry Rasmussen's influential work.²² Perhaps the widest theological proposal so far which uses the framework of Eco-Reformation is a long article by David Rhoads. He builds a Lutheran theological basis for a "paradigm shift" from a "human-centered" worldview into a "creation-centered" and ultimately theocentric one.²³ Indeed, Lutheran ecotheology has always had wide roots. Key ecotheologians have come from various seminaries, universities and countries. In addition, for

every famous ecotheologian there are numerous people who have promoted the view on a grassroots level. The most famous theologians are the tips of an iceberg.

It is crucially important to notice that important issues regarding the themes of Eco-Reformation have been, and are, discussed without using that word itself. The notion that the environmental crisis requires a vast change in attitudes, practically a “reformation”, was discussed already by the pioneering Lutheran and ecumenical ecotheologian Joseph Sittler (1904–1987).²⁴ Many Christians in the global ecumenical movement emphasized a similar view. Lutherans had a special role in the development of a global ecotheological movement, but that happened always in contact with ecumenical influences.²⁵

Another key Lutheran ecotheologian is H. Paul Santmire, who has also recognized the influence of Sittler’s thought on his theology. However, Santmire has always operated more with specific Lutheran theological categories than with a Sittlerian nature and grace -framework.²⁶ A strong point of convergence is Christology. Both Santmire and Sittler emphasize Christology as both related to personal salvation and to universal salvation (the so-called “cosmic Christology”, of which there are different variations of).²⁷ To my knowledge, Santmire has not, so far, explicitly used an Eco-Reformation framework, which once again points to the need to see similarities in thought between those who use it and those who do not.

A recent interesting dissertation by Daniel R. Smith delineated three heuristic categories of Lutheran ecotheology: the “historical revisionist school” of Sittler and Santmire, the “science-theology school” of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Ted Peters, Philip Hefner and Niels Henrik Gregersen, and the “theo-ethical school” of Larry Rasmussen, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Vítor Westhelle.²⁸ In my view, Smith has succeeded in selecting key figures especially from a North American view point. However, his typology must be seen as emphasizing theological style, and in order to analyze exact views of these theologians, a variety of typologies must be used. For example, there are similar views of Christology by theologians from several of these three categories.²⁹

I have personally found helpful to use a combination of two typologies as a help in analysis. Paul Santmire’s threefold typology of “apologist” (close to “stewardship”), “revisionist” and “reconstructionist” ecotheologies helps in bringing out the theological position as regards traditional interpretations of Christianity. In this category, Rasmussen’s current position is somewhere between revisionist and reconstructionist, although with strong Lutheran influences.³⁰ Another helpful

typology was originally developed by Laurel Kearns and later applied by Willis Jenkins. He delineates three “practical strategies” in environmental ethics and ecotheology: “stewardship” (moral agency), “eco-justice” (nature’s value) and “ecological subjectivity” (interconnectedness). I personally prefer to use the term “nature’s value” for the second category, since eco-justice is at the end a different kind of point.³¹

When Lutheran ecotheologies are analyzed by using Jenkins’ categories, the result is that official church statements have tended to emphasize stewardship and moral agency. Progressive Lutheran ecotheologians have emphasized nature’s value and ecological subjectivity in various ways. I have argued that Sittler’s pioneering ecotheology included all three, but especially brought into Lutheran ecotheology the emphasis on ecological subjectivity. In this he was strongly influenced by poetry and the arts, the natural sciences and process thought, although he distanced himself from more naturalistic versions of process theology.³² Sittler’s colleague Philip Hefner has continued this emphasis on ecological subjectivity. Although Hefner’s main field has been religion and science, he has over the years contributed to ecotheology also.³³

This points to a crucial element in current ecotheologies, including Lutheran ones. The problem of polarization may lead people into thinking that only those who are labeled “ecotheologians” speak about ecotheology. On the contrary, ecotheology is done as part of various theological projects, as Hefner’s example shows. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, as James Nash before her, does it as part of an overall proposal for ethics.³⁴ It is integrated into various proposals for explicitly contextual theologies, drawing, for example, from South American theologies of liberation and/or feminist theologies.³⁵

Ecotheology has become integrated also into Biblical studies, which has been a traditional area of expertise among Lutherans. Currently, many of the leading international scholars in what has become called “ecological hermeneutics” are Lutheran. Norman Habel is a key figure on the whole field and its practical adaptation, Terence Fretheim is a top scholar of Old Testament views of nature, and Barbara Rossing has gathered fame as ecotheological interpreter of the book of Revelation.³⁶ Another field in which Lutheran theologians have recently been among the international top contributors is the discussion of worship life and the environment. Habel and Rhoads have participated in this, but the most significant contributions have come from Gordon Lathrop and H. Paul Santmire.³⁷

God's Presence and Acts in Nature

In concluding, I briefly discuss here certain key themes in Lutheran and ecological theology. I give special attention to the Eco-Reformation texts and to European and Scandinavian ecotheology. One of the important theological arguments that have been made in support of Christian appreciation of nature is the claim and belief that God is present in nature. There are naturally many different interpretations of this. In recent Lutheran ecotheology, Larry Rasmussen's argument about panentheism has been prominent. Rasmussen builds on both ecumenical influences and Luther's thought in relation to this. His term, "Luther's joyous panentheism", is found in the texts related to Eco-Reformation proposals.³⁸

Two points are to be made about this. First, Lutheran ecotheologians have used also other frameworks to describe a similar thing, that God is both transcendent and immanent.³⁹ H. Paul Santmire has directly criticized the application of the notion of panentheism to describe Luther's thought about God's presence in nature, which he believes to be better captured by using the terms "paradoxical and mystical."⁴⁰ The second point is, however, that despite the differences, Lutheran ecotheologians have argued for roughly a similar thing. They agree that God is both transcendent and immanent, that Luther believed so, and that Luther's writings on the topic form a basis for ecotheology. What they may disagree about is the language, and the metaphor of the world as God's body.⁴¹

In my view, Lutheran ecotheology would do well to understand that panentheism is often used as a practical tool for building bridges between God's immanence and transcendence. All the philosophical and theological implications – and complications – are not always carefully thought of. There is evidently power in the metaphor, otherwise it would not be so much discussed. However, instead of the concept, the argument itself seems to be the key. In fact, efforts to build bridges between immanence and transcendence can be used as basis for analysis of ecotheologies, for almost all of them aim for that purpose. Different terms are used of the two ends of the bridge, so to say: creation and salvation, creation and redemption, sacred and secular, nature and grace, and so on. Various possibilities of integrating the two include Christological interpretations, different versions of "sacramental ecotheology",⁴² Pneumatology, Jürgen Moltmann's emphasis on *Shekinah*⁴³ and so on.

An interesting recent Lutheran ecotheological proposal from the Nordic countries is the Climate Programme of the Lutheran Church of Finland, which builds on both ecumenical influences and the

so-called “Finnish interpretation of Luther” (the Mannermaa school).⁴⁴ God’s presence in nature is explained by a Trinitarian emphasis, drawing from an interpretation of Luther’s view of God as characterized by self-giving love. It is argued that the purpose of the created realm is to manifest this love, which cannot happen if ecosystems are too much damaged.⁴⁵

The late Lutheran theologian Ronald F. Thiemann once claimed that there are similarities in Joseph Sittler’s interpretation of Luther and the Mannermaa school interpretation.⁴⁶ Be that as it may, there is in my view more theological work needed in Lutheranism’s understanding of God’s work and presence in creation. The concept of the Word of God is central for Lutherans, but as Sittler showed in his early work, for Luther the concept is closely related to “Gospel” and “revelation”.⁴⁷ The late Finnish Luther scholar Eeva Martikainen writes in relation to Luther’s views on Baptism: “Christ comes to human beings in sermons as well as the sacraments. For Luther, the concept ‘word’ means the creative, direct, self-giving presence of God himself.”⁴⁸

Thus, at least in the sacraments, God is present in other ways than words alone. It is a debated issue how much revelation can be experienced in nature from a Lutheran point of view. Lutheran theologian Niels Henrik Gregersen has explored Luther’s views about sacramentality, arguing that for Luther, natural events can become sacramental because of God’s action.⁴⁹ Paul Tillich was ready to affirm even more “intrinsic value” to natural elements, because they are created by God.⁵⁰

In these interpretations, God’s work in nature and special revelation are not as distinct from each other as has sometimes been thought. This ancient theological question related to revelation and the relation between “common grace” and “special grace” continues to have ecotheological relevance. I am personally fond of such a position which emphasizes the importance of special revelation (“Word of God” as thus understood, and even a Bonhoefferian “costly grace” could be evoked here), but remains open to God’s work in the world of nature (and culture). This begets a question: what term should Lutherans use of the work of God in general? Talk about the “force” of God has become difficult after the movie series *Star Wars*, but something of the kind would be needed in order to capture how God works in both words and actions.

Theology of the Cross and the Environmental Crisis

Luther’s theological views about the cross and suffering have been increasingly adapted into ecotheology. Three pioneers, who have explicitly used the framework of theology of the cross, are Douglas John Hall, Larry Rasmussen and Vítor Westhelle.⁵¹ More recent proponents include

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Wanda Deifelt.⁵² It is not possible here to extensively evaluate these theological proposals. I will conclude by suggesting a few themes towards a practical adaptation of these views into addressing different aspects of the environmental anxiety that I discussed above. An emphasis on the theology of the cross is extremely relevant in an era of environmental crisis, for it reminds us that Christianity is not about success as measured by earthly standards. God is present with us in times of suffering and despair.

Lutheran theology could link this theme even wider into the various situations that people currently have. Here are some examples:

- An old interpretation is that the cross is discomfoting. This provides a link with the environmental crisis. It is not easy to encounter suffering, but a realistic view of the world demands that. By facing the environmental crisis, people face the “cross of all creation”, with the cross of Christ as their help.
- God is present with communities which suffer from the results of environmental degradation, environmental racism and the results of climate change. This includes, for example, the Sami people in the Nordic countries, people living in sinking islands of the Pacific, or those that suffer from toxic waste in black neighborhoods in the US.
- God is present also with people and communities who find themselves in the middle of models of life which they know that are environmentally damaging, but which are very difficult to change, such as those who work at the oil industry.⁵³ Even more widely, all those people who find that their will is in bondage to environmental sin are confronted by the cross and delivered a promise that God still loves them and wants them to love others and all creation.
- Those who can be called environmental activists often despair because of the difficulties that they face, and because they are aware of the damage being done to ecosystems. Christians have a special source of hope and comfort in the cross and resurrection.

The cross of Christ was not a simple success story. Regarding the environmental crisis, it is clearly not evident that humanity will find enough solutions, motivation and action. Defeatism must be avoided, but the realistic option that the world is heading into a deepening crisis must also be seriously considered.

What is needed is the encounter of different emotions and anxieties related to the environmental situation, with the purpose of finding meaning and even joy in the midst of a tragedy.⁵⁴ This is how Pope Francis ends his strongly environment-related encyclical, *Laudato Si'*,⁵⁵ and this is also a very Lutheran way of seeing life. There is attributed to Luther a saying that if the world would end tomorrow, a tree should still be planted today. Regardless of whether the saying was uttered by Luther, it nevertheless manifests a very Lutheran attitude – one worthy of being carried forward.

Endnotes

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- ¹ For a wide discussion of these Eco-Reformation plans, see David Rhoads, “Reflections on a Lutheran Theology of Creation: Foundations for a New Reformation”, *Seminary Ridge Review* 15:1 (2012), 1–47.
- ² In my studies, I have shown that pioneering Christians started to discuss environmental matters from a theological viewpoint already in the first decades of the 20th Century. On the contrary, a common assumption is that this kind of activity began only in the late 1960s or even later. However, it should be emphasized that a serious change did happen since the end of the 1960s: with the generation of what we call the “environmental movement” and the rising environmental awareness, the number of Christian contributions to the matter started also to grow. See Panu Pihkala, *Joseph Sittler and Early Ecotheology* (Diss., University of Helsinki, 2014).
- ³ For more analysis, see *Ibid.*, 13–23.
- ⁴ For an easily readable but wide-ranging discussion, see George Marshall, *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). For psychoanalytic views, see Sally Weintrobe, ed., *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2013).
- ⁵ Larry Rasmussen, for example, sees this as unavoidable: see his *Earth-Honoring Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121–3.
- ⁶ For the concept of identity politics, see Cressida Heyes, “Identity Politics” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2012), online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/> (accessed September 30, 2015). I currently work in the University of Helsinki under Prof. Risto Saarinen at a research project which applies theories of recognition into theological processes. Results of my own research on recognition and environment have so far been published only in Finnish: Panu Pihkala, “Ihmistä laajempi luonto ja luomakunta identiteetin rakentajana” in *Uskonto ja identiteetipolitiikka*, ed. Elina Hellqvist, Minna Hietämäki and Panu Pihkala (Helsinki: STKS, 2015), 121–43.
- ⁷ For the environmental movement in general this phenomenon has meant a splintering into different groups since the 1980s in general. For an interesting interpretation of the story of the environmental movement and its certain similarities with Christianity, see Thomas Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).
- ⁸ See Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental ethics and Christian theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 31–111 and my discussion about it in Pihkala, *Joseph Sittler and Early Ecotheology*, 23–7.
- ⁹ For general overview, see “The psychological impacts of global climate change,” *American Psychologist* 66:4 (2011): 265–76. “Climate neurosis” is a term used by Finnish psychologist Johannes Lehtonen.
- ¹⁰ For example, in Scandinavia this has been shown in Finland (Sami Myllyniemi, ed., *Puolustuskannalla: Nuorisobarometri 2010* (Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusseura, 2010) and in Sweden (*A Bishops' letter about the climate*, The Bishops' Conference [Uppsala: Church of Sweden, 2014], 42).
- ¹¹ Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in denial: climate change, emotions, and everyday life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).
- ¹² This has also been a major emphasis in Lutheran ecotheologies. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is often cited in support of this kind of view (see, for example, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, “Cross, Resurrection and the Indwelling God” in *God, Creation and Climate Change*, ed. Karen L. Bloomquist (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2009), 154–5), but as will be discussed below, this view is shared by Luther and numerous Lutheran theologians.
- ¹³ Harold Searles, “Unconscious processes in the Environmental Crisis”, *Psychoanalytic review*, 59:3 (1972), 361–74, quoted in Shierry Nicholsen, *The Love of Nature and The End of the World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 129.
- ¹⁴ Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 88–104.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93–98.
- ¹⁶ Nicholsen, *Love of Nature*, 132–3. Cf. John Foster, *After Sustainability: Denial, Hope, Retrieval* (London: Routledge, 2015).

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- ¹⁷ Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Olson, “Symbolic Immortality” [originally published in 1974], in *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 32–9. My experience with the Lutheran clergy in Finland is that they recognize these phenomena very clearly, but at least so far the concept of symbolic immortality is not well known.
- ¹⁸ Nichol森, *Love of Nature*, esp. Chapter 5.
- ¹⁹ In many funeral chapels around the world, especially in Scandinavia, the altar wall has a large window towards nature. This directly links the seasons and nature with the process of dealing with death.
- ²⁰ The changes in winter weather are a major theme in Norgaard, *Living in Denial*. See, for example, xiii–xix.
- ²¹ See the content at <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/> (accessed September 21, 2015).
- ²² Rasmussen’s *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996) was an international bestseller in ecotheology and included much reflection on Luther and Lutheran theology (see esp. 270–94). He pointed to themes related to Eco-Reformation in “Waiting for the Lutherans”, *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37:2 (2010), 86–98. For Paul Santmire’s analysis of Rasmussen and several other ecotheologians from a Lutheran background, see “American Lutherans Engage Ecological Theology: The First Chapter, 1962–2012, and Its Legacy” in *Eco-Lutheranism*, ed. Karla G. Bohmbach and Shauna K. Hannan (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2013), 17–52.
- ²³ Rhoads, “Reflections on a Lutheran Theology of Creation”, 4–5.
- ²⁴ See, for example, his essay which was originally published in 1970: Joseph Sittler, “Ecological Commitment as Theological Responsibility” in *Evocations of Grace: Writings on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, ed. Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 80.
- ²⁵ I am currently writing a study on early ecumenical ecotheology, 1948–1972. Lutheran pioneers in ecotheology from that period include, in addition to Sittler, Paul Tillich, Günter Altner, Harold Ditmanson and H. Paul Santmire.
- ²⁶ Sittler started his writing career, as regards monographs, by what was then a groundbreaking study of Luther’s doctrine of the Word of God (Joseph Sittler, *The Doctrine of the Word in the Structure of Lutheran Theology* (Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, 1948), but he did not fully integrate this with his later ecotheology. For an overview of Santmire’s work, the best account so far is his theological autobiography: H. Paul Santmire, “Ecology, Justice, Liturgy: A Theological Autobiography”, *Dialog* 48:3 (2009), 267–78. Santmire has been a key interpreter of Luther’s contributions to ecotheology since 1970. See especially his “Creation and Salvation According to Martin Luther: Creation as the Good and Integral Background” in *Creation and Salvation, Volume 1: A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies*, ed. Ernst M. Conradie (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2012), 173–202.
- ²⁷ For an example of this, see H. Paul Santmire, “So That He Might Fill All Things: Comprehending the Cosmic Love of Christ”, *Dialog* 42:3 (2003), 257–78.
- ²⁸ Daniel R. Smith, *Toward a Lutheran theology of nature: An ecological ethics of the cross* (Unpublished dissertation, Graduate Theologian Union, 2013).
- ²⁹ For some reflections on these similarities, see Santmire, “American Lutherans Engage Ecological Theology”.
- ³⁰ Cf. Santmire, “American Lutherans Engage Ecological Theology”, 34–9, 49–50.
- ³¹ Pihkala, *Joseph Sittler and Early Ecotheology*, 24–7.
- ³² *Ibid.*, Chapters 6 and 7.
- ³³ One of Philip Hefner’s most significant contributions for Lutheran ecotheology is “Beyond Exploitation and Sentimentality: Challenges to a Theology of Nature” in *Concern for Creation: Voices on Theology of Creation*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd, 1995), 119–141. For Santmire’s views on Hefner’s ecotheological legacy, see Santmire, “American Lutherans Engage Ecological Theology”, 28–29, 47.
- ³⁴ See James A. Nash, *Loving nature: Ecological integrity and Christian responsibility* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1991).
- ³⁵ For examples from around the world, see *Creation and Salvation, Volume 2: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*, ed. Ernst M. Conradie (Zürich, Lit Verlag, 2013), 237–379.
- ³⁶ For an overview of the field, see *Ecological hermeneutics: biblical, historical and theological perspectives*, ed. David Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavropoulou (London: T & T Clark). Fretheim’s key work on the subject is *God and world in the Old Testament: A relational theology of creation* (Nashville : Abingdon Press, 2005) and Rossing’s is *The Rapture exposed: The message of hope in the book of Revelation* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).
- ³⁷ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy ground: A liturgical cosmology* (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2003); H. Paul Santmire, *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008). See also the works of Benjamin M. Stewart and Lisa E. Dahill.
- ³⁸ Barbara Rossing, “And God saw that it was good: Reflections on Theology of Creation” in *Creation: Not For Sale*, ed. Anne Burghardt (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2015), 201; Rasmussen, “Waiting for the Lutherans”, 95.
- ³⁹ Sittler condensed his view into an aphorism: “God is not identified with the world, for he *made* it; but God is not separate from his world, either. For *he* made it.” Sittler, *The Structure of Christian ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998 [1958]), 4.
- ⁴⁰ H. Paul Santmire, *Before Nature: A Christian Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 136–43.

⁴¹ Sallie McFague is especially known for using this metaphor. See her *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁴² This may mean an emphasis on the significance of the traditional sacraments for ecotheology, or an emphasis on a general “sacrality” of the universe. For one take on this, see Santmire, *Ritualizing Nature*, 107–111.

⁴³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), a key work in ecotheology.

⁴⁴ See Olli-Pekka Vainio, ed., *Engaging Luther: A (New) Theological Assessment* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010); and Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, ed., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁴⁵ *Gratitude, Respect, Moderation: Climate Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland* (Helsinki: Church Council, 2008). Available online at

[http://sakasti.evli.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/F3A06B8C0ED34CDFC2257EBB004D49D7/\\$FILE/KH_ilmasto_ENG%203.pdf](http://sakasti.evli.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/F3A06B8C0ED34CDFC2257EBB004D49D7/$FILE/KH_ilmasto_ENG%203.pdf) (accessed September 22, 2015).

⁴⁶ Personal communication between Prof. Risto Saarinen and Thiemann. See also Pihkala, *Joseph Sittler and Early Ecotheology*, 61–2.

⁴⁷ Sittler, *Doctrine of the Word*.

⁴⁸ Eeva Martikainen, “Baptism,” in *Engaging Luther*, Vainio, 99.

⁴⁹ Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Natural Events as Crystals of God – Luther’s Eucharistic Theology and the Question of Nature’s Sacramentality,” in *Concern for Creation: Voices on Theology of Creation*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd, 1995), 143–57.

⁵⁰ Paul Tillich, “Nature and Sacrament,” in Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 94–112. See also the analysis in Pihkala, *Joseph Sittler and Early Ecotheology*, 139–49.

⁵¹ For relatively early contributions by them, see Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Larry Rasmussen, “Returning to Our Senses: The Theology of the Cross as a Theology for Eco-Justice,” in *After Nature’s Revolt: Eco-justice and theology*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 40–56; Vitor Westhelle, “Cross, Creation, and Ecology. The Meeting Point Between the Theology of the Cross and Creation Theology in Luther,” in *Concern for Creation*, Mortensen, 159–67.

⁵² Moe-Lobeda, “Cross, Resurrection and the Indwelling God”; Wanda Deifelt, “From Cross to Tree of Life: Creation as God’s Mask,” in *Eco-Lutheranism*, Bohmbach and Hannan, 169–176. See also Rhoads, *Reflections on a Lutheran Theology of Creation*, 6, 28–29.

⁵³ See the reflections by Cam Harder, “Neighbor-loving: Ecology from an Oilpatch Perspective,” in *Eco-Lutheranism*, Bohmbach and Hannan, 121–43, and Mark Narum, “Prairie, Petroleum, Pondering: What Does this Mean?,” in *Eco-Lutheranism*, Bohmbach and Hannan, 144–54.

⁵⁴ This would be my response to Foster, *After Sustainability*, which emphasizes the depth of the problems and tragedy. The attitude that is required is well captured by the interpretation of *homo ludens* by Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

⁵⁵ Available online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (accessed September 21, 2015).