CLIMATE CHANGE

CULTURAL CHANGE

Edited by Anne Elvey & David Gormley-O'Brien
Tackles the urgent issues arising from climate change and explores how hidden resources in our religious traditions can guide our responses. Various chapters in the book draw from the Scriptures startling and fresh insights on how both Hebrew and Christian writers see God at work in the entire Creation, loving it and holding it in being. Other chapters recover patristic and later theological thinking on how deeply connected we humans are with matter itself, along with all living things, and hence our responsibility to reverence the entire Creation as a part of God’s handiwork.

Christianity has long been in the green line of fire for fostering the human exceptionalism that has historically legitimated industrial civilization’s onslaught upon the Earth. Acknowledging that religion, at least in its culturally dominant formation in the West, has been, and in some cases remains, part of the problem, the varied contributions to this excellent volume nonetheless give grounds for hope that an ecologically renovated Christianity, in consort with other religious traditions, might also become part of the solution. Bringing together perspectives from science, theology, biblical studies, ministry, and the sociology of religion, this collection of incisive and inspiring essays by established and emerging scholars, activists and eco-faith practitioners from Australia and Oceania, demonstrates some of the diverse ways in which religious understandings and practices can contribute towards countering the rampant consumerism fuelling social injustice, environmental destruction and global warming, as well as nurturing just and compassionate responses to the dire impacts of those climatic changes that have now become inevitable.

Kate Rigby,
Professor of Environmental Humanities, Monash University

Climate Change – Cultural Change is an innovative contribution to the difficult conversation about the implications of climate change, and how to draw from the deep wells in our Scriptures and religious traditions to refine our notions of ‘the good life’ in which all can share.

Bruce Duncan CSsR
Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill VIC

Climate change is the greatest challenge we face as the global community of life in the twenty-first century. It clearly must be central to the agenda of the churches of Australian and the Pacifica. This rich, diverse, collection of essays leaves the reader with a sense of the Spirit at work stirring Christian communities to action. It is full of Christian hope that can provide the impetus for change at all levels.

Denis Edwards
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Chapter 6
To Live the Good Life: An Early Christian Exhortation to Self-sufficiency
David Gormley-O'Brien

Academics in universities and colleges around the world are voicing their concern about the ever-increasing rate and scale of environmental pollution, depletion of the earth's natural resources, and anthropogenic climate change. Trinity College at the University of Melbourne is likewise committed to ensure that issues pertaining to sustainability and the environment are taken into account in the many facets of College life. One of the initiatives is to integrate sustainability and environmental considerations into the whole curriculum from the sciences and engineering, to law, medicine, and even the arts and theology. As a result of this initiative I see myself the challenge of integrating sustainability concerns into the study of Patristics and, in this essay more specifically, providing an ecotheological reading of Clement of Alexandria's Paedagogus (Paed.). This essay proposes a critical but sympathetic appraisal of Clement's notion of self-sufficiency as a radical alternative to the prevailing unbridled and unsustainable consumerism of the West, and increasingly, alarmingly on account of the potential scale involved, of the East, that leads to a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, environmental pollution, and anthropogenic climate change.

This essay presumes that the ecological crisis is largely a spiritual problem; that is, it is not resolvable solely through technological means; we also need to address issues of morality and human values if the crisis is to be averted or ameliorated.1 Sir David King, the Director of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, a centre of research that brings together academics, economists, and leading members of industry and government, to focus on global environmental issues, advocates the need to move beyond a purely scientific or economic approach to environmental and sustainability issues and to raise other questions of values, what constitutes a good life and what makes us satisfied human beings.2

3. The question of Stromateis being the third work of the trilogy, what Clement also calls the Didaskalia, has been a scholarly debate for quite a while. I think the debate can now be laid to rest after Andrey Itter's convincing monograph on the topic which points to its favour. See Andrey C. Itter, Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria, Supplements to Vigilae Christianae, vol. 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

4. There also exists in fragmentary form a list of excerpts attributed to a certain Theodotus who entertained gnostic beliefs deemed incongruent with those of the mainstream church. It is likely that Clement intended to refute the ideas in these excerpts, as was the standard practice at the time (e.g. Origen's Contra Celsum), but due to the text's fragmentary nature and Clement's proximity to Origen, it was understandable that later Byzantine librarians would confuse Clement's thoughts with those of Theodotus.
ability to deal with the present-day crisis: what is it to be human and what makes us as humans happy?

Contrary to the current trend in many ecotheological studies which militate against the scriptural perspective of an anthropocentric universe and tend to blur the distinction between human and non-human creatures, Clement has a very high view of what it is to be human. Certainly, God made all things. They are deemed good and are loved by God. Therefore both humans and non-humans have intrinsic value. Nevertheless, humans are the noblest of God's creatures. Whereas God created animals and plants by voice alone, humans were made by God's own hands and are thereby dearer to God, having the love-charm within (τὸ φιλάτρον ἐνδον). Humans are thereby both part of the created order and uniquely adapted to commune with God. The motion of the stars is for the benefit of humankind and it is chiefly for the sake of humans that all things were made.

Even though Clement exalts humankind as unique amongst the created order and insists that God made all things chiefly for our sake, this does not mean that it is good to use all things at all times. Clement shared a similar estimation of the human condition with the Stoics of his day. Humans, through ignorance and bad upbringing, do not naturally understand where true happiness lies and have a proclivity towards gratifying their base desires. These base and irrational passions are easily inflamed by luxuries and superfluities and there is therefore a need for external restraint with laws, for education and for the development of positive habits, for humankind to learn to choose the good and to use external things properly. Simplicity (ἡ ἄφελετα) is a trained habit, which does away with superfluities.

Wealthy believers need to be educated so that they are able to determine what things are useful based on the occasion, time, mode, and intention. Some things indeed can be harmful to the soul and the body. These are luxuries and are more prone to lead to pleasure and indulgence. These tend to be difficult to access in the first place. God supplies necessities like air and water free to all; and what is not necessary, like gold and pearls, God has hidden in the ground and the sea, where they are best left alone.

How do humans come to acquire the ability to choose beneficial and useful things and develop the habit of simplicity? This capacity comes through the practice of philosophy, or at least Clement's selection of the best elements of the major schools that cohere with his rendering of the scriptures, especially the dominical sayings in the Gospels. He has a high view of Plato and knows his Dialogues thoroughly but it is Musonius Rufus, whom Clement does not name, but upon whom he is largely dependent in his instruction to the wealthy in the Paedagogus. Not many people know about the Stoic philosopher, Musonius, today. He flourished in the mid to late 1st century CE and was very well known at the time. Even though, like Socrates, with whom he was favourably compared, Musonius did not write down his teachings, his discourses and way of teaching were perpetuated by his pupil, Epictetus, who maintained a school in Nicopolis; these discourses (Disc.) were in turn preserved for posterity by the latter's student, Arrian, who took copious notes.

For Clement, Christianity is the true philosophy and the Christian is the truly good person. Following Musonius, Clement insists that both men and women ought to philosophise. He goes one step further and insists that all Christians, not solely the literate, ought to philosophise and that this dictates a deliberate disposition and approach to life that permeates even the most mundane tasks, even going to the market-place or shop. To philosophise is to follow after and love life. It is the means by which humans come to believe the kerygma and it is the means by which we come to love God, our neighbours, and ourselves.

A. Human Propensity towards Unbridled Consumption and the Need for Restraint

In the Paedagogus Clement admonishes the wealthy for their excessive consumption of food and wine and luxurious practices with respect to vessels, furniture, conduct at banquets and the baths, clothes, shoes, makeup, jewellery, indeed anything smacking of the refined life in Graeco-Roman culture. Clement's method in addressing each of these subjects is through parody, cascading lists of luxurious items corresponding to the subject, emphasising their overseas provenance if relevant, and deriving these lists by mining snippets and allusions from various classical literary sources, some from Athenaeus' Deipnosophistae and Euripides' Orestes, some from other equally well known works, and others presumably from works no longer extant or only surviving in fragmentary form. For example, the wealthy in their insatiable greed go to great trouble to procure lampreys from Sicily, eels of the Maeander, goats from Melos, mullets from Scithia, mussels of Pelorus, oysters of Abydos, whitebait from Lipara, turnips from Mantinica, beetroot

5. Paed. 1.8.63.1.
6. Paed. 1.3.7.3.
8. Paed. 3.11.55.2.
11. Paed. 2.11.78.1–79.2.
from Asclepius, and so on. Clement therefore caricatures and embellishes the practices of the wealthy, stereotyping and highlighting their opulence and greed.\textsuperscript{12}

His main point, following Musonius, is that luxury deranges everything and distorts nature.\textsuperscript{13} Excess, which in all things is an evil, is especially reprehensible with respect to food. You see such people, says Clement, who are more like pigs and dogs, than humans, being in such a hurry to feed themselves, stuffing both cheeks full at once, veins popping, perspiration running all over the face, due to their greed and panting due to their excess. Everything for these people has to do with the gratification of the belly. They are beasts in human shape, crawling on their bellies.\textsuperscript{14}

The body gains no advantage from extravagant foods. Indeed, the wealthy are often unhealthy because they eat foods that are unsuitable for humans. Humans by nature are not sauce-eaters. In contrast, plain fare is healthy and therefore most suitable for us. It aids digestion, gives strength and lightness of body. This is exemplified in the scriptures. The disciples practised frugal eating by giving the post-resurrection Lord a piece of broiled fish. The loaves and fishes blessed by the Lord are an excellent example of plain fare, being digestible, God-given, and moderate. We are not debauched from certain dainties like honeycomb because they are simple and ready for immediate use without elaborate preparation.\textsuperscript{15}

The wealthy trouble themselves about rich and dainty dishes, holding cooks in higher esteem than farmers. The believer on the other hand shuns daintiness and does not abuse the father's gifts. He or she uses them without undue attachment, having command over him- or herself, by partaking of few and necessary things.\textsuperscript{16}

Christians therefore ought to eat simply and never to excess. We must guard against the types of food that entice us to eat when we are not hungry, beguiling the appetite. The diet that is excessive is contrary to nature. It injures a person, leading to obesity, deteriorating the spirit, and rendering the body prone to disease. Full feeding begets in the soul uneasiness, forgetfulness, and foolishness. Living to eat rather than eating to live is more appropriate for the irrational beasts than for humans. It is totally irrational and unnatural for

\begin{itemize}
\item humans to fatten themselves like cattle, looking downwards towards the earth, always bending over tables. Clement notes that the bodies of children grow up right by deficiency in nourishment. He mentions Plato who condemns a life of luxury where people are filled twice a day.\textsuperscript{17}
\item Since luxuries and excess are at the same time harmful to the body and soul and so alluring to us, there is need for external restraint through legislative means. According to Clement, the Jews had frugality enjoined upon them by the Mosaic Law which included amongst other things restrictions concerning food and clothing. The function of the Mosaic Law was to break down the propensity towards indulgence through bad habits.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{itemize}

B. Wherein Lies Happiness—Self-sufficiency and Living according to Nature

Extremes are dangerous. The medium state is always good. Neither of the two extremes of affluence or poverty is able to lead a person to happiness. The reasons for both are precisely the same. They both cause a person to be anxious and vexatious, to the extent that is detrimental to any degree of true happiness (εὐδαιμονία). Even if a person were to become a Midas, he or she would not be satisfied, but still act as if he or she were poor, craving other wealth.\textsuperscript{19}

Clement proposes a middle course between the extremes of the unbridled acquisitions and consumerism of the elite and the wowsersim of the sectarian enkratites, between luxury and penury. This medium is self-sufficiency (συνεξουσία), a state of voluntary frugality, which may be attained by a few necessary things, where a person leads a life of simplicity, providing for himself or herself on a daily basis rather than through excessive preparation. To be in want of necessities is the medium where the desires in accordance with nature are bounded by sufficiency.\textsuperscript{20}

Clement follows Aristotle in stating that a truly happy person will be self-sufficient. For Aristotle any standard of living which either through excess or defect hinders the service and contemplation of God is bad.\textsuperscript{21} Contemplation of God is the criterion for choosing natural goods like health, wealth, and strength. True happiness lies in the balance between theoretical activity and self-provision where we no longer need to divert excessive energy towards acquisitions.

\begin{itemize}
\item Paed. 2.1.3.1-2.
\item Musonius, Disc. 20.
\item Paed. 2.1.7.4-8.1.
\item Paed. 2.1.7.3.
\item Paed. 2.1.9.4; cf. Musonius who also laments that cooks are more in demand than farmers (Disc. 18b).
\end{itemize}
Excess in drinking is also reprehensible. Those who have adopted an austere life, who are fond of water and flee from wine, are to be admired. Certainly boys and girls ought to refrain from wine where it is akin to adding fire to fire with regards to the passions. However, in the case of grown-ups, wine is appropriate with dinner, provided that it is taken in moderation and that one has the occasional alcohol-free meal for health reasons. The occasional abstinence from drink will enable the superfluous moisture to be absorbed by the eating of dry food, and hence avoid the excess of fluid intake evinced by constant spitting, wiping beads of perspiration, and frequent evacuations. In the evening, a little wine may be used when we are no longer engaged in serious readings. Those who are advanced in age may partake more cheerfully of wine. The harmless medicine of the vine offsets the chill of old age. Wine mixed with water is conducive to health. Both wine and water are works of God, and life consists of what is necessary and what is useful.

If believers do drink then they ought to buy locally. When one lives in Alexandria, one must not go to much trouble in acquiring the famous Ariousion wine from the island of Chios. Imported wines from overseas are for an appetite enfeebled by excess. The soul even before drunkenness is insane in its desires, says Clement. Why should not wine from one's own country suffice? If you import wine you would be as stupid as the Persian kings who even imported water from the Choaspes River, in modern-day Afghanistan. (A modern analogy to this would perhaps have to do with the extraordinary success in recent years of the advertising industry in persuading people living in cities to buy bottled water where plentiful clean water is already available from the tap.) According to Clement, the Holy Spirit deems wretched (ταλαπαξίας) the wealthy who drink strained wine and recline on an ivory couch on account of their luxurious practices.

Vessels, shoes, clothes, and everything else ought to be chosen for their utility, not because they are ornate or expensive. Clothes should keep one warm during winter and protect from the sun in summer. Since men and women have similar needs, their clothes ought to be similar, useful, modest, and not ostentatious. The Lord drank water from an earthen vessel given to him by a Samaritan woman. In doing so he made utility, not extravagance his aim. Rather than accumulating ornate and useless vessels that pander to ostentation and excess, the wealthy, says Clement, acknowledging Plato, ought to possess inexpensive utensils that are multi-functional, serving more than one necessary purpose, so that a variety of things may be done away with.

C. Working with One's Own Hands

In several places in the Paedagogus Clement promotes the virtue of self-help or doing things with one's own hands (αὐτουπραγία), in contrast to depending wholly upon servants. Wealthy believers, living a self-sufficient life, are encouraged to make do without a plethora of domestics. In working one should always aim for moderation. We should neither be idle nor completely fatigued. Labouring above measure is bad for the health. It is exhausting and makes one ill.

Musonius promotes farming as ideal for a philosopher; Clement does not. However, Clement does exhort the wealthy elite to attend to their own needs even if this means doing menial tasks. Men ought to do outside chores, hoeing the ground, chopping wood and drawing water for their own need and the needs of the family. These are all excellent forms of physical exercise, and ought not to be considered demeaning. Attending to our own needs is an exercise free of pride. Women similarly are to gain exercise through spinning and weaving, in making clothes for themselves and their family. They are, with their own hand, to fetch what is required from the larder. It is no disgrace for a wealthy woman to apply herself to the mill. By labouring with her own hands a woman displays thrift and adds a certain beauty to herself, both through beneficial bodily exercise and adornment, not wrought by others but woven by her own hand whenever she requires. The important point for our study here is not to dwell on the stereotypical roles in late second century Graeco-Roman society but the fact that, in Clement's notion of self-sufficiency, men and women ought to provide for their own needs as much as possible through their own labour and exertion.

D. Providence, the Limited Good, Social Justice, and the Need for Community

Contrary to the frequently held Stoic ideals of the early imperial period, Clement's notion of self-sufficiency leads neither to social independence, nor to a heroic individualism where a person acts as an island fortress battling

22. Paed. 2.2.20.2–22.2.
23. Paed. 2.2.30.1–4.
24. Paed. 2.2.30.4; cf. Amos 64–6.
25. Paed. 2.3.38.2.
26. Paed. 2.3.36.3; cf. Musonius who prefers simple furnishings to costly ones (Disc. 19–20).
27. Paed. 3.10.51.1–2.
28. Paed. 3.10.50.1–2.
29. Paed. 3.10.49.1–3; cf. Musonius who deems manual labour appropriate for a philosopher (Disc. 1.1).
single-handedly in the quest to subdue the passions. Rather self-sufficiency, for Clement, leads to economic and religious interdependence between members of a community. Following Christ can only take place in the context of the church community.

The church is an alternative society of friends. It is covertly subversive, with its own King and its own law, and its own social values that turn the cultural conventions of Graeco-Roman society upside down, largely on account of the fact that the wealthy, in Clement’s schema, do not retain their exalted patronage status in the new community. It is a microcosm of the good, or at least of men and women striving to be good, where God’s providence is meted out to all.

For Clement, social justice or the practice of sharing superfluous goods between friends is developed from his understanding of the nature of God. God is Good. The Good does good. And God does no good to people without caring for and taking care of them. The good God is the one who ultimately owns all good things and as the steward (ταυτίκος) grants the use of these good things to all people. Drawing on a commonplace from Antiquity, Clement asserts that all things therefore are to be held in common (κοινά τὰ πάντα), and it is not for the wealthy to appropriate an undue share. Retaining superfluous possessions neither benefits a person, nor the community. It is inappropriate for the wealthy to hold on to their superfluous possessions since that would mean that someone else in the community would have to go without.

In this scheme of the limited good, God, in his providence, supplies just enough ‘common goods’ to meet the needs of all the members in the community without superfluities. God feeds the fowls and fishes. As humans are better than they, being their lords, and more closely belonging (οικειοτέρος) to God, then it will be clear that no one is poor as regards to the necessities of life, nor

30. In saying this, I do not mean that the Stoics ignored the practice of almsgiving. Musonius also encourages the wealthy to shun luxury and donate to charity (Disc. 19–20).

31. Clement is the earliest witness to the idea of going to a place dedicated to a Christian assembly or synaxis (Paed. 3.11.79.3).

32. Paed. 1.8.63.2.

33. Quis Dives Salvator 6.4; cf. Homer, Iliad 4.84=19.224; where Zeus is the ταυτικός, the dispenser of all things to people.

34. In the use of the masculine pronoun there is no intention to attribute a masculine gender to God. Clement conceives of God largely in apophatic terms as the unknowable and ineffable one. Indeed, he refers to the maternal nature of God in his love for humankind (Quis Dives Salvator 37).

35. Paed. 2.3.38.1–5.


37. Paed. 3.7.40.1.

38. Paed. 2.12.120.1–2.


environmentally destructive. While the degree of complexity of the ancient agrarian economy can be debated and ought not be assumed to be simple necessarily, Clement conceived of things in terms of the limited good and thereby all things must be shared on an equitable, although not necessarily equal, basis. He distinguishes between necessaries and luxuries, observing that his world had a few people who were wealthy and lived in luxury while there were a much larger number of people who did not have even the necessities for daily life. He was convinced that God, in his providence, supplies just enough to meet everyone's needs. The inescapable conclusion is that the wealthy few were responsible for the poverty of the many. For Clement, it is obscene for one to live in luxury while many are in want.

Clement frequently berates the wealthy in his society for their obesity, gluttony, and wastage of food. Obesity has become pandemic in many of the affluent nations of the world, especially in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and has serious global ecological implications. In contrast to the situation in Late Antiquity, the poorer classes in the Western world today are just as susceptible to obesity as the wealthy due to the availability of cheap processed and high energy food, and unhealthy choices. A recent study published in the *BMC Public Health* journal discusses the impact of obesity on world food energy demands by exploring the concept of biomass, which is the total energy requirement of a species, in this case, the human species, as a function of the number of organisms and their average mass.

The study notes that while population growth rates are slowing down or in some cases are stagnant among the affluent countries in the West, the biomass of humans in these countries continues to increase. This is on account of the increasing average body mass due to a larger proportion of overweight and obese people in these populations. As there is a greater energy cost in moving a heavier body and there is an increase in metabolically active lean tissue that accompanies increases in body fat, energy use increases with body mass. In the present time there are more than a billion adults who are overweight and the world's population distribution of body mass is continuing to move upwards. The important point to note here is that the global ecological footprint of the human species is not solely due to rising population numbers (which was the focus of Hardin's paper in 1968) but also to increases in average body mass.


Furthermore, this study notes that the increased global demand for food arising from the increase in body mass is likely to contribute to higher food prices with the poorer nations being most affected by the rising prices.

Sustainability is chiefly a question of freedom versus justice. A free market economy in capitalist countries, where governments are loath to regulate supply, demand, and prices, is based on the assumption that mutual self-interest leads to a mutually beneficial point of equilibrium. This form of economy is prone to failure as experienced most recently in the global financial crisis. It even has a tendency to exacerbate and widen the gap between the wealthy few and the many poor, as G. K. Chesterton notes, reflecting on inequity of the economic system in early 20th century England: "Too much capitalism does not mean too many capitalists, but too few capitalists." Even though he appeals to human conscience, Clement has a realistic understanding of human nature and insists on the need for external restraint through legislation (the Mosaic Law for the Jews prior to the incarnation, and the Law of Christ for Christians). Simply appealing to human conscience with regards to protecting the environment and fair and sustainable distribution of the earth's resources is insufficient. As Hardin explains in his description of the tragedy of the commons, there will be those who change their ways and make moral choices when confronted with such appeals but there will always be many more who are prone to exploit the moral decisions of the few. Appeals to conscience need to be buttressed by coercion. As Hardin notes, coercion is a dirty word to many but it need not denote arbitrary decisions made by irresponsible and insensitive bureaucrats. Rather coercion can be regarded as mutual, a set of restrictions agreed to by the majority of people concerned. We could use coercion to encourage people to live a more self-sufficient lifestyle through

44. Walpole et al., 'The Weight of Nations', 6.
46. Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', 1247.
the use of taxes that punish those who consume more than they need and reward those who do not.\footnote{In 2010, the Senior Management Team at Trinity College made the decision, controversial at the time but now far less so, to reduce substantially the number of car parks available to its staff. Staff who wished to park their cars on campus, were now confronted with the choice of entering into a ballot every year and paying annual parking fees or receiving a large grant towards their annual public transport costs (totally funded from the parking fees). This is an exemplar of the notion of coercion that leads to a positive sustainability outcome (more staff now ride their bikes or take public transport to campus) to which I am referring here.}

In describing the self-sufficient life-style, Clement uses language and imagery that is very suggestive to a reader-response critique from an ecotheological perspective. Rather than ‘sweeping the world with a dragnet’ to satisfy their greed for culinary dainties, the wealthy Christian is to ‘tip toe on the earth,’ keeping his or her mind on heavenly things and not being concerned about the morrow.\footnote{Paed. 1.5.16.3; cf. Musonius who refers to the wealthy ("foodies" is the modern-day term) who sail the sea from end to end in search of dainties (Disc. 18b).} Clement’s phrase ‘tip toe on the earth’ (δεινόμενοι πολλοί ἐφοδίασαν τῆς γῆς) may not be as ecologically laden as the modern term ‘ecological footprint,’ but it does connote the idea that we need to focus on and pursue the important things of life, that we not be taken up and distracted in the consumerist treadmill of constantly acquiring more and more possessions in the sacred quest for wisdom.

In spite of the differences between his world and ours, Clement provides an alternative to the materialistic culture that fuels the ecological and social crises today. He not only highlights the moral and social justice obligations pertaining to the high consumption of the wealthy at the expense of the poor, he also emphasizes that it is in the self-interest of the rich to reject a way of life of unbridled consumption and to embrace voluntary frugality and a simpler and more satisfying lifestyle. He exhorts his readers to live a real life (τῆς παλιάς ἀληθίνης).\footnote{Pae. 1.12.100.3.} In so doing, he addresses the fundamental psychological question of what makes us, as humans, happy. He identifies that the unrestrained acquisition of wealth and luxuries can never lead to happiness. Wealth and luxury are artificial. They are incompatible with human nature and only cause anxiety and stress through their inability to satisfy the human spirit. The greatest of all lessons in philosophy, and therefore the Christian religion, in Clement’s view, is to know one’s self. Knowing oneself leads to knowledge of God, and by knowing God one is made like God in well-doing, being self-sufficient, and requiring as few things as possible.

So once the certain threshold is reached, where basic needs of food, clothing, and housing are met, income per capita is a poor indicator of human wellbeing. If this is indeed the case, then it is a cause of concern that rich nations continue to endorse an economic policy of continual growth, unwittingly or unwittingly, in spite of the fact that it no longer contributes to human happiness.\footnote{Ronald Inglehart, 'The Diminishing Marginal Utility of Economic Growth', Critical Review 10, no. 4 (1996): 509; quoted in Alexander, 'Living Better on Less', 4.} Indeed, there are studies which seem to indicate that ever increasing material gain, after the threshold, can become a burden, making us less happy, less satisfied, more prone to overwork, stress and the neglect of relationships, and degrades the environment unnecessarily.

In light of his research, Alexander puts forwards his main thesis that is completely in harmony with that which Clement promoted to wealthy believers in Alexandria in his Paedagogus, 1800 years ago: that many people in affluent countries could actually live better, happier, and more pleasurable lives by reducing and restraining their consumption to the things that they really need. In place of unbridled consumerism is what Alexander calls the...
Chapter 7

Deep Incarnation: A Resource for Ecological Christology

Deborah Guess

A Cosmic Over-emphasis in Ecological Theology

In recent decades levels of environmental awareness and concern have rapidly increased, yet theology which is done from an intentionally ecological position has become neither widespread nor standard and remains a 'legitimate subdiscipline' within the broader discipline of theology. Perhaps one of the reasons why ecological theology has not impacted mainstream theology is that its focus has often been on the doctrine of creation so that Christology has been comparatively eclipsed. Celia Deane-Drummond notes that 'It is surprising, perhaps, that while the literature on ecotheology has proliferated in the last half century, there is a relative lack of sustained focus on the relationship between ecology ... and Christology."

There are exceptions to the relative neglect of Christology in ecotheology. One of the best known is the thought of Matthew Fox who argues that the current crisis in environment and spirituality calls for a paradigm shift in Christian consciousness away from human-centred 'personal Savior' theology in favour of a contemporary restatement of the ancient Christian concept of the Cosmic Christ. Discourse from Fox and others on the cosmic dimension of Jesus Christ has been influential within and beyond ecological theology, yet has also been subject to criticism on the grounds that it fails to adequately address the particularity of the Incarnation and is therefore 'over against the historical Jesus'.

The tendency to express an ecochristological position which subordinates the particular to the paradigmatic or the general is not restricted to Matthew Fox. It can perhaps be seen in Catherine Keller's desire to put 'breathing room' between 'Jesus' and 'Christ', in Diarmuid O'Murchu's argument that we are able to imagine the Cosmic Christ not because of the particular Jesus but because