Ecological Aspects of War—Imagining Creaturely Mission

Anne Elvey, Keith Dyer and Deborah Guess
University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia

Introduction

In his introduction to Reimagining God and Mission in Australia, the late Ross Langmead asked in 2007, “What is happening in this culture (or cluster of cultures)? How is God experienced in this context? And how is the Good News of God best shared in this society?” In 2016 these remain pertinent questions. For many committed Christians, mission is not so much about growing churches but rather concerns social justice and action for peace often in concert with interfaith and other advocacy groups in the wider society. Increasingly social justice is seen as interrelated with, or better part of, ecological (or environmental) justice, but action for peace often remains a human-focused mission.

In Australian cities and suburbs, there is a veneer of peace as we have no war on our shores and much-reported terrorist incidents remain infrequent here in practice. Nonetheless, for those who grew up after the second world war, that war and World War I have remained part of the Australian cultural imagination as ANZAC day commemorations attest. Moreover, Australia has been officially engaged in wars since 1945 several times (including Korea 1950–1953, Vietnam 1962–1975, Iraq 1990–91, Afghanistan 2001–present, Iraq 2003–2009, and Iraq [Operation Okra] 2014–present), in addition to being a partner to the United States in the Cold War with the USSR (1945–1991).

For Christians acting for peace and justice, the Second World War—with the horror of the Shoah, the invention of nuclear weapons and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945—has not left us. As nuclear arms proliferated, a threat to the whole Earth community became part of the “post”-war cultural imaginary expressed in films such as On the Beach (1959) and Dr Strangelove: Or How I Learnt to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964), and later prompting the Palm Sunday Peace rallies of the 1980s. This sense of threat to the whole Earth community is now more readily recognised (despite significant pockets of denial) in the reality of anthropogenic (human-induced) climate change.

More recently, the Palm Sunday rallies have become Rallies for Refugees. Participants protest Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers setting out for Australia by boat, and call for a politics of welcome in contrast to the current cruel practices of offshore detention. Australian military personnel are engaged in the program to “turn back the boats.” The critical global refugee situation has arisen in large part due to war (both within and between states) as well as state sanctioned oppression. This refugee crisis will increasingly have environmental factors, for example, as rising sea levels affecting low lying islands and atolls in the Pacific Ocean occasion what are being called “climate refugees.”

It is arguable that war and climate, desertification and famine, have already been factors over many years for populations of refugees leaving from, or displaced within, Sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate change, Australia’s military engagement in recent and current wars, and the refugee crisis, both globally and Australia’s local responses, are interrelated considerations in our research project on ecological aspects of war. Given the scope of the issues, the topic is indeed broad. Our first aim is to situate questions of war and peace in a wider ecological framework particularly in relation to Australia. Our second aim is to bring insights from religious traditions to bear on the complex, seemingly impossible global situation which touches almost (and arguably) every people and place.

In this article, we set out some considerations around war, peace and environment, with a focus on the twentieth and twenty-first century phenomenon of “security anxiety”, with particular reference to Australia and our regional context. Second, we give two examples of Christian theological response to these considerations: the first biblical (focusing on the Book of Revelation); the second christological (focusing on the concept of “deep incarnation”). Then, we suggest some factors that might contribute to a Christian approach to a cultural transformation adequate to respond to the complex interweaving of war, security anxiety, colonial violence and climate change in our region.
War, Peace and Environment

The conjunction of the topics of ecology and war may evoke images of Vietnamese forests denuded by Agent Orange, or the burning oil wells fired during the Gulf War. It can also invite a more complex reflection on the ecological impacts of human action in times of war and peace. J R McNeill argues that “the dominant characteristic of the twentieth-century international system was its highly agitated state”, evident especially in “security anxiety”. McNeill considers the way wars over the period impacted on local environments which were often remarkably resilient in returning to health post-conflict. The picture is not simple: land set aside for the purposes of security, in times of war or peace, is sometimes healthier than otherwise, sometimes not, and where deforestation accompanies war (as it has at least since the time of the Caesars) forests are usually not as quick to regrow as fields. More significantly, in the twentieth century the “international system … selected rigorously against ecological prudence in favor of policies dictated by short-term security considerations”. Further, McNeill writes:

By far the largest environmental effect of security anxiety came via the construction of military industrial complexes. After World War I it became clear that, aside from plenty of young men, the main ingredient of military power was heavy industry. Horses and heroism were obsolete. All the great powers of the twentieth century adopted policies to encourage the production of munitions, ships, trucks, aircraft—and nuclear weapons.

Given the intersection of military power and industry post the fossil fuel driven industrial revolution, the ongoing existence of nuclear weapons, and the environmental impact of nuclear waste, it could be argued that there is no longer a time that is not a time of war or preparation for war. The notion of the “Cold War” is evidence of this, as is the “security anxiety” that has, if anything, escalated in the twenty-first century. Such “security anxiety” is evident in Australia in the current operation Okra, the rhetoric around asylum seekers, and the fear-driven prejudice toward the Muslim community and the building of new mosques.

Robert Mason and Anna Hayes describe this anxiety in Australia as part of a “public imagination” marked by “a sense of vulnerability” and “a limited capacity to imagine the suffering that predated refugees’ arrival”. Moreover, a limited capacity to imagine the suffering of the other is broader than the question of “border protection” and asylum seekers arriving by boat, and marks, for example, the instrumental use of other animals (especially those subject to intensive industrial farming practices) and the fate of future generations of humans. Perhaps McNeill’s linking of “security anxiety” with a failure to adopt “ecological prudence” is cogent in relation to Australian politics and culture, where climate change denial rather than effective action infects the federal Coalition government.

To focus this discussion, we outline three interwoven contexts for a consideration of ecological aspects of war in relation to Christian mission in and emerging from Australia: climate change and the intersection of ecological and social justice in the Carteret Islands; Tim Winton’s description of a (post) colonial war on people and environment in Australia; and an apocalyptic cultural imaginary expressed in popular culture.

1. Climate change and the intersection of ecological and social justice

Part of Papua New Guinea, the Carteret Islands which have a population of around 2500 are situated 86 km from Bougainville. Under environmental stress, especially “an exceptionally high inundation event in 2008”, people from the Carteret Islands have relocated to Bougainville assisted by a variety of Christian churches across the world. Carteret Islander, Ursula Rakova, Executive Director of Tulele Peise (“Sailing the Waves on Our Own”), highlights the fate of others in the Pacific who face environmental stress due to climate change and who do not have a Bougainville to which to retreat.

The experience of peoples seeking refuge as an adaptation to climate change exemplifies the interconnectedness of social and ecological justice. Along with the multiple ways in which humans now influence the lives and habitats of other than humans, the interconnectedness of social and ecological justice highlights the inter-influence of humans and their own habitats. It means that we need to see humans as embedded in more-than-human habitats, affecting and affected by the interconnected fates of more-than-human others.
2. A (post-)colonial war on people and environment in Australia

In discussing the future of Pacific Islander peoples, Rakova also points not only to the necessity for refuge and compensation but also to the inadequacy of Australia’s response to climate change, especially given our per capita contribution to the problem and our ongoing coal mining industry. This ostensibly ‘normal’ peacetime industry can be seen as itself a form of “war” on the Earth. Former president and current vice-president of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, Dr Jenny Grounds, speaks of “Planet Earth as a Victim of War”, but Earth might also be seen as a victim of so-called “peace”. Jurgen Brauer writes, “when the guns are silent, nature does not necessarily recover because by all appearances peace (economic development) is a continuation of war on nature.”

The modest attention paid to this understanding may be associated with a set of unconscious or barely-conscious anthropocentric assumptions which, arguably, influence us so pervasively that when we consider questions such as war and peace we do so primarily through the lens of human wellbeing rather than the wellbeing of the entire Earth community. In doing so we can become oblivious to the consequences of our usual, “peace”-time economic activity which inflicts damage of a warlike status on the Earth.

For Western Australian writer Tim Winton, this war on the Earth has a particular colonial aspect in Australia. Winton writes:

> All over the continent in the nineteenth century, as colonists began to attain a familiarity that wasn’t quite commensurate with their territorial gains, disdain for the first peoples and a suspicion of the fickleness and treachery of the new lands created a sort of siege mentality.

This attitude and a kind of “security anxiety” resulted in “increasingly high-handed and martial” relations with Indigenous people. The “aggro-defensive mindset” was not assuaged by the routs, massacres and dispossession visited on Indigenous peoples. Rather the attitude to the first peoples of the continent was reflected in, and accompanied by, a “warlike” attitude to the land itself:

> Every goldrush was a pillaging skirmish, a raid for booty, and for most miners the engagement was brief, brutal and fruitless. In the wake of each frenzied campaign the land lay gouged and despoiled for decades, even centuries, and few retreating combatants ever spared the places they’d ruined another thought.

While he argues that attitudes have changed and that many non-Indigenous Australians now afford “intrinsic value” to the “natural world”, Winton comments that this has been “the dissenting tradition” implying that these “conscientious objectors to the war on nature” have been few. He writes of his “ancestral shame” that “[w]hether our European forebears came in chains or in hope of a new life and fresh opportunities, their arrival was a catastrophe for Aboriginal peoples and for the land itself.”

In an Australian society still marked by varieties of settler security anxiety, the expendability of persons—either as young soldiers, Indigenous inhabitants of toxic dumps or nuclear testing sites, or asylum seekers seeking to enter Australia by sea—is not only a social but also an ecological issue. Not only are social and environmental justice interconnected, but attitudes to persons deemed “expendable” also reflect a (both potential and actual) violent unsettledness in relation to the land itself. Perhaps this violent unsettledness is reflected in Australia’s inability to respond adequately to climate change.

3. An apocalyptic cultural imaginary

With its global impact, climate change is cause for broad-reaching security anxiety. But climate change is not the first global “threat” to be so. As noted earlier, in the post-World War II years the threat of nuclear war, and a nuclear winter, had this sense of global reach. Australia with its practical support of U.S. nuclear capacity, for example through bases such as Pine Gap, was not outside the apocalyptic imaginary evoked. While the film On the Beach set in Melbourne portrayed the city as one of the last places to be affected by a global nuclear catastrophe, it brought home the domesticity of the nuclear threat.
More recent films and books in the popular apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genre, such as The Day after Tomorrow (2004) and Kim Stanley Robinson’s “Science in the Capital” trilogy, Forty Signs of Rain, Fifty Degrees Below, Sixty Days and Counting, focus on climate change. For Robinson, his writing in this genre is underpinned by hope and a belief in the power of science. For some the popular (post) apocalyptic genre confirms that there is an awful inevitability about the political and ecological implosion of our planet, and that religion has something to do with it.

The relationship between war, the environment and religion (and in particular, the interpretation of religious texts and traditions) demands our closest attention in this context—and especially in those polarised situations where religion is either assumed, or not assumed, to be of particular relevance. Western media is full of references to Islamic fundamentalism and its nexus with terrorism, sometimes also to Jewish conservative factions and their hard-line approach to the problems in Palestine and the occupied territories, but seldom does it reflect on Christian fundamentalism and its relationship to the Western incursions into the Middle East in recent decades. Yet the way that all sacred texts are interpreted has implications not only for the reasons and justifications for war, but also in shaping attitudes towards any consequences for the environment.

An Alternative Community: A Biblical Response

Readers of the New Testament might be forgiven for thinking that both war and the environment are of peripheral interest in those texts and their interpretive traditions. The word "war" itself (polemos) occurs only in one reported saying of Jesus about the inevitability of war (Mark 13:7 twice; Matt 24:6 twice; Luke 21:9, along with earthquakes, famines and plagues—"these things must happen...", dei genesthai), and in one metaphorical reference to kings counting the cost of war (Luke 14:31), accounting for all the explicit references to war (6) in the gospels. Three references in the epistles seem to refer to “spiritual warfare” (1 Cor 14:8; Jas 4:1,2?), one to the heroic past of Israel (Heb 11:34), and the remaining 15 references are found in Revelation, where perhaps we might have expected even more.

Yet all these texts were written within fifty years of a major Roman war against the Judean uprising (66CE–73CE)—including the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70CE)—resulting in a crushing Roman victory that established the Flavian Dynasty, celebrated by the minting of Iuda Capta coins for decades by Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. This brutal reassertion of Roman hegemony in the East had a profound effect on the world of the New Testament, in prospect and retrospect, on humans and on the circum-Mediterranean environment; yet understandably, this is evident only in allusions and “hidden transcripts”.

If the threat and memory of war hovers ever-present but often unnoticed around many New Testament texts, the suffering voice of Earth is embedded within them, emitting groans too deep for words (Rom 8:19–23). War may be seen as inevitable given the avaricious nature of human sovereignty (Mark 10:42–45; Rev 13:7–8), but it is never glorified or described in detail—not even the Book of Revelation provides battle scenes—only graphic descriptions of the aftermath (Rev 19:19–21).

Nonetheless, the ecological consequences of war and imperial exploitation are repeatedly and increasingly made plain in Revelation: four of the seven broken seals reveal the explicit consequences for Earth (6:4, 8, 10, 13), and the extent of the damage for one quarter of the Earth (6:8) increases to one third (8:7,10) and to six of the seven trumpets (8:7 earth; 8:8 sea; 8:10 rivers and springs; 8:12 sun, moon, stars; 9:1 earth; 9:3 earth). Not all of this devastation is attributed to war alone, since John the Seer is relentless in his exposure of imperial hubris and the exploitative trade practices of empire as well (Rev 18). Yet the consequential order of events is made clear at the outset by the four horsemen of the apocalypse: 1. conquering and “victory” (6:2); 2. war and violence (6:4); 3. unfair trade and economic exploitation (6:3); and 4. sword, famine, plagues, unbalanced ecology, and death (6:8).

It is not surprising then that when the perpetrators of violence themselves (“the kings of the earth, magnates and generals and the rich and the powerful”) become victims of the ecological disasters they have caused and call upon Earth (“the mountains and rocks”) to protect them, help is not forthcoming (Rev 6:15–16). Rather, we hear of the active involvement of Earth in struggling to resist such destructive powers (Rev 12:15–17) by assisting in the birth of an alternative community.
Ultimately, and in contrast to many populist constructions of apocalyptic eschatology where the righteous are “snatched away to heaven”, this alternative community lives in a renewed heaven and earth, graced by the presence of God and the slain Lamb—since the New Jerusalem descends from heaven to this renewed earth, and the leaves of the tree at the centre of this garden city bring “healing to the nations” (Rev 22:2). Such non-violent and ecologically aware readings of Revelation are by no means universally accepted, but they are becoming increasingly important in challenging spiritualised and anti-Earth interpretations (“Heavenism”, as Norman Habel terms it), and in countering those commentators who have seen John as advocating a grim passivity and withdrawal whilst awaiting divine intervention. Nor are these perspectives limited to interpretations of the Book of Revelation, but are confronting the docetic, Earth-denying spirituality of high modernist biblical interpretation in all corners of the canon.

Deep Incarnation: A Christological Response to Anthropocentrism

Earth-denying spiritualities, whether based in a colonialist anxiety about settlement or in a modernist desire for scientific certainty, need also to be engaged theologically. For a number of ecotheologians, anthropocentrism forms a philosophical and theological underpinning of the present ecological crisis and should be addressed when it occurs in Christian thought. One doctrinal area which is fruitful for discussion around anthropocentrism is Christology. When Christology interprets the meaning of Christ in primarily, even exclusively, human terms an ecological difficulty can arise: if divine purpose and focus in the Incarnation is only or mainly restricted to the human, this may seem to endorse the view that humankind has an inviolable priority or privilege over other species.

A response to this difficulty is found in the non-anthropocentric version of ecological Christology known as deep incarnation, where the event of Jesus as the Christ has a broad scope which encompasses the other-than-human as well as the human. Niels Gregersen is usually credited with having coined the phrase “deep incarnation” though his ideas have been discussed and developed by others such as Elizabeth Johnson, Denis Edwards and Celia Deane-Drummond.

In the deep incarnational perspective, the Incarnation is seen as occurring so profoundly within creation that a connection can be claimed to exist between Jesus and the whole Earth community, organic and inorganic; other than human and human. This connection is “deep” because it draws on the concepts of deep ecology (humans are embedded within ecological systems) and deep history (which emphasises the things humans share with animals and plants).

Deep incarnation de-emphasises the human by stressing that “[i]n Jesus Christ, the divine Logos assumed the entire realm of humanity, biological existence, earth and soil”. Christ thereby reveals the divine Logos through and in Christ-self, holding all things together “within the matrix of materiality that we share with other living beings”. Rather than being solely or primarily associated with human beings, Christ is seen as “synchronous with each creature in time and co-inherent in all that exists in time and space”.

The idea of deep incarnation coheres with traditional Christian understandings to the extent that in the Christian tradition there is a special and central place given to what is material. This is seen in the Incarnation; the Gospel stories of Jesus feeding and healing bodies; the events of the Cross and Resurrection; the notion of the Church as the body of Christ; and the significance of sacraments which utilise the physical and tangible elements of the world. Despite the tendency for Christianity at times to over-emphasise the spiritual, matter is nevertheless central.

There are three ways in which the idea of deep incarnation facilitates a non- or anti-anthropocentric Christology, having the potential to protest the ecological “war” deployed against the Earth.

First, the claim of a common flesh between Jesus and other organic beings (perhaps also the inorganic world) suggests that bodies, flesh and matter are inherently valuable. Because matter is the place in which God reveals Godself, it becomes possible to ascribe a certain value, even dignity, to all that exists. This affirmation of value implicitly critiques the instrumentality which characterises the present economic paradigm.
Second, Christian theology can claim a public space in which to question behaviours which automatically subvert other than humans to human utilitarian practices. It can do this in a way which is broadly comprehensible in contemporary culture. Deep incarnation takes the notion of the Word out of the restrictions of substance philosophy and towards contemporary ideas about the Earth community as formed through the process of evolution.

Finally, deep incarnation is able to counter anthropocentric tendencies in Christian and Western thought because it implicitly transcends hierarchical dualisms such as spirit and matter, human and other-than-human. A deep incarnational theology extends our understanding of ourselves, both individually and as a species as intrinsically interconnected. Re-imaging ourselves in this broader way can challenge anthropocentric attitudes and behaviours.

**Creaturely Mission**

This challenge is only a beginning. A deep incarnational theology needs not only to establish a counter-anthropocentric grounding for a new cultural imaginary informed by Christian thinking, but it also needs to speak to the “security anxiety” that accompanies and exacerbates the destructive nexus between human wars and our “war” on the Earth itself.

That this “war” has a particular colonial nuance in Australia, points to one area of response. As Winton has begun to do in his memoir, a kind of recognition and repentance needs to be applied not only to relations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians but also with the land and all its creatures. This requires a maturity of imagination so that we do not fail to imagine the suffering of the other, whether the other animal, the displaced person, or creatures (other-than-human and human) living a century from now.

To refer to this recognition and repentance as an ecological conversion is apt, but may be insufficient to the complex interweaving of war, security anxiety, colonial violence and climate change. An effective transformation of imagination, culture and practice toward an ecologically centred mode of human being is multi-dimensional.

First, it requires, a counter-anthropocentric deep incarnational reimagining not only of Christ as creature, but a consonant Christian anthropology that understands humans to be creatures among creatures.

Second, this transformation requires a christological understanding of the suffering not only of the other human, but also of the other creature and of the entire Earth community. In such a shift of understanding and imagination, the meaning of suffering needs to be rethought in ways that are respectful of the other creature’s experience and intent toward being.

Third, it is possible that other-than-human creatures and the Earth itself will respond to ecological damage in ways we have not wholly predicted. This should be cause for humility when we describe the current age in terms of human-induced climate change, even as we rightly resist those who would deny the human impacts on climate post the industrial revolution. Such a capacity for Earth and other creatures to respond on their own terms needs in a Christian context to be read as part of their relationship with a Creator God, a relationship which does not depend on humans.

Fourth, a shift of imagination toward an integral Christian ecology requires an ecological holiness marked by attentive action, humility, an empathic openness to the other creature (both human and other-than-human) and a profound regard for the habitats that sustain us.

Fifth, the interconnectedness that underlies both the destructive and healing effects of human actions on others and the necessity of other creatures to sustain any human individual and society, can be the underpinning for adopting an intentional interdependence in community. Such communities are described in biblical writings, not only in Revelation, but in the new kinship of the reign of God. Writing of the Gospel of Luke, Michael Trainor describes a “basileia–ecotopia” that is “not a place but an encounter with God and an experience of ecological solidarity by all Earth’s members”. Communities living from such a vision today may be as small as a local neighbourhood or church. The important point is their modelling an integral ecology.
Sixth, understanding ourselves as creatures among creatures, albeit creatures of a particular species with species-specific capacities for relationship with God, suggests that Christian mission, the sharing of the Good News, not only requires Earth but extends to other creatures. By this we mean first that Christians require for their sustenance a more-than-human community on which their capacity for mission relies. Second, Langmead’s question “And how is the Good News of God best shared in this society?” needs to be read in the light of the interconnectedness of ecological and social justice. We need to ask not only what this Good News might mean for other humans, but what it might mean for other creatures not only insofar as their fates are interconnected with ours but also and especially on their own account.

Seventh, given the complex nexus of war, security anxiety, colonial violence and climate change, a Christian response will be open to multi-faith dialogue on peace and ecological community, perhaps leading to a shared vision of an ecological holiness that is effective in shaping a renewed cultural imagination.

Conclusion

Our research project “Ecological Aspects of War: Religious Perspectives from Australia” is in its early stages, and our thinking above reflects that. The first part of the project was a one day conference under the same title in September 2015. While most presenters were Christian, the conference was intentionally designed to begin an interfaith engagement on the topic, and included Buddhist, Indigenous and agnostic perspectives, as well as research from a lawyer on Islamic law. A key aspect of the day was the potential for dialogue between activists and theologians.

Biblical scholars drew on the traditions of the Earth Bible project and modelled hermeneutics that gave space for the agency of Earth as a character within biblical texts generally read as depicting human conflicts. Both the keynote speaker, Jenny Grounds, and Mick Pope made a strong case for the intersection between contemporary wars and climate change. In response to Grounds, John McDowell argued for a reshaping of desire.

In the context of the effective transformation of imagination discussed above, and the kinds of security anxieties and consumerist desires promoted in contemporary Australia, this reshaping of desire is critical. Such a reshaping of desire towards what Pope Francis calls “an integral ecology” could be good news for a community of creatures among which Christians find a humbler more eco-centric place from which to enact their mission.

1 The authors are grateful to the University of Divinity for the award of a Research Small Grant in 2015 that contributed to this research project.


See, for example, ALEXANDER, Cathy, *Climate Refugees: In the Too-Hard Basket?*, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, (University of Melbourne), http://sustainable.unimelb.edu.au/climate-refugees (accessed 10 May 2016)


9 Ibid pp344-47
10 Ibid p341
11 Ibid p342

MASON, Robert and HAYES, Anna, *Towards Sanctuary: Securing Refugees and Forced Migrants in Multicultural Australia*, in HAYES, Anna and MASON, Robert [eds], *Cultures in Refuge: Seeking Sanctuary in Modern Australia*, (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), pp1-11 [pp5-6, 10]


WEST, *What Do You Do When Your Country Is Sinking?*

Ibid.

GROUNDS, Jenny, *Planet Earth as a Victim of War*, keynote address to Ecological Aspects of War: Religious Perspectives from Australia conference, 28 September 2015, Trinity College Theological School, Parkville, Victoria.


Ibid pp91-92

Ibid p92
For Winton the focus here is on native born Australians who do not have Indigenous heritage.


For a critical analysis of the relationship between film and the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse), see WALLISS, John and QUINBY, Lee [eds], *Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010); and for scholarly engagement with the popular “Left Behind” series of books (over fifty million copies sold!), see GRIBBEN, Crawford and SWEETNAM, Mark S [eds], *Left Behind and the Evangelical Imagination*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011). Both books are part of the Apocalypse and Popular Culture series, edited by John Walliss, in The Bible in the Modern World series, edited by J Cheryl Exum, Jorunn Okland and Stephen Moore.


Ibid, p45

Ibid, p36

Ibid, p36


See, for example, HABEL, Norman, *The Crucified Land: Towards Our Reconciliation with the Earth*, in *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* Vol 28, no 2, 1996, pp3-18

In terms of cosmological, geological and evolutionary time, humans are latecomers to Earth. From an ecotheological perspective, the creator God was in relationship with myriad other creatures long before humankind came to be.


The suggested neologism “kindom of God” for *basileia tou theou* is particularly appropriate in this context. The term comes from: ISASI-DIAZ, Ada Maria, *En la lucha (In the Struggle): Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*, (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003)


*Laudato Si’* (ch 4)