The Earth Bible Sermons are a form of pulpit advocacy; calling people to solidarity, networking and the envisioning of a "sustainable community." They attempt to encourage congregations to articulate ethical bases and to promote transformation through theological foundations in terms of faith perspectives, ethical implications and spiritual engagement. They exhort congregations to understand and discuss the concept of "sustainable community." What are the basic elements that are required for people to live lives characterised by health, social justice, ecological sustainability, security and spiritual fulfillment. Listen to the voice of God both in the Scriptures as well as in the words of the other. Experience the foretaste of the promise of "peace on earth" as you read and reflect on the Earth Bible Sermons critically and empathetically along with the suffering earth community.

Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad is an Environmental - Scientist, Writer and Activist. He has been actively campaigning for Green Church since Nineties and is currently serving as the Hon. Director of the Department of Ecological Concerns of Church of South India.
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Earth Bible Sermons – 2

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The Department of Ecological Concerns would like to place on record the support of EMS for the publication of this book and to ISPCK for publishing this book.

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**Foreword**

With great pleasure I present before you the Earth Bible Sermon volume 2. Under the leadership of Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad, Hon. Director of the department of Ecology, fifty Clergy of Church of South India have been working together for the last six months to bring out Earth Bible sermons. Department of Ecological Concerns has already published volume I on 8th April 2015 during the special synod held at Chennai. It was greatly acclaimed by the Christian circles. For the publication of the second book, Earth Bible sermon workshops of the Clergy were held at Ooty and Goa, to study the Earth Bible volumes I and II. Earth Bible is an effort of Australian Eco-theologians to study the Bible on the basis of eight eco justice principles. The Clergy of CSI have been trying to bring out a Christian response to ecological issues, in the back drop of the current ecological issues in India, interacting with environmentalists and activists all over India. These interactions are primarily aimed at bringing up a group of Green Clergy as eco resource persons in each Diocese and the Earth Bible sermons delivered by the clergy of CSI will reach the grass root level.

CSI is the only Church in India which has Ecology as a mission mandate in the Constitution. In 1992, Most Rev. Ryder Devapriyam, then Moderator of CSI constituted an ecological committee in the Synod. Now CSI has a department at the Synod level as well as ecological committees or departments at the Diocesan level. For us Eco conservation is a part of our faith. We have published 12 books in English to educate our members and one book in regional languages also. All the Colleges and Schools under the management of CSI have eco clubs. We have been
giving Green Diocese, Green Parish, Green School, Green farmer, Green Home awards at the synod level and diocesan level to promote ecological activities. CSI has been honoured by UNDP in 2009 with an international Eco-award.

I would like to congratulate all the Clergy who are participating in this venture and especially Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnaekad for his good leadership and initiative

Rt. Rev. Dr. G. Dyvasirvadam
Moderator, CSI

Preface

The earth is in peril. Our only home is in plain jeopardy. For the very first time in the history of creation, certain life support systems of the planet are being destroyed by human actions. We, as people of faith in God, still believe and hope in the future”. The so-called “ecological crisis,” by its magnitude and speed, threatens the very life of the planet Earth as a whole. The massive presence of injustice suffered by the majority of the world’s population, and the voracious use of the limited resources of the planet by exploitation and overconsumption, constitute a lethal combination that exercises enormous pressure on the carrying capacity of the Earth, to the point of threatening the whole web of life.

We must realise that well-being cannot be equated with material wealth. The quality of life is not dependent on the quantity of material things or growth measured by GDP. Instead, our standard of living depends on our standard of loving and sharing. We cannot sustain a world dominated by profit-seeking, rampant consumerism and gross inequalities, and an atmosphere of competition where the powerful take advantage of the weak without caring for the well-being of every form of life. Ecological crisis is thus a matter of international justice and inter-generational justice.

The urgency for the “spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem,” and the call of “commitment towards building a humane and caring global society, cognizant of the need for human dignity for all,” makes it abundantly clear that the ecological crisis is not merely an economic, social or political problem. It is fundamentally a deep moral and theological issue. Bold
actions are needed to tackle the problems head on with a political, social and individual will to change what needs to be changed, to undo trodden paths of destructive consequences and to correct injustices to people and to mother Earth. A new paradigm, for “a new way of engaging in dialogue with all beings and their relationships” is emerging.

According to its Greek derivation, the word ‘ecology’ means ‘the doctrine of the house’ (OIKOS). What does the Christian doctrine of creation have to do with ‘a doctrine of the house’? Renowned theologian Moltmann profoundly states that “If we see only a Creator and his work, there is no connection. But if we understand the Creator, his creation, and the goal of that creation in a trinitarian sense, then the Creator, through his Spirit, dwells in his creation as a whole, and in every individual created being, by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life. The inner secret of creation is this indwelling of God, just as the inner secret of the Sabbath of creation is God’s rest. If we ask about creation’s goal and future, we ultimately arrive at the transfiguring indwelling of the triune God in his creation, which through that indwelling becomes a new heaven and a new earth (Rev.21), and at God’s eternal Sabbath, in which the whole creation will find bliss. The divine secret of creation is the Shekinah, God’s indwelling; and the purpose of the Shekinah is to make the whole creation the house of God. Existence can only become a home if the relationship between nature and human beings is without stresses and strains - if it can be described in terms of reconciliation, peace and a viable symbiosis.”

Thus the Bible calls us to conserve the earth in all its biodiversity, recognising the intrinsic value of all creatures. It is to understand the organic relationship between humans and all creation with due recognition that we are what we are by virtue of our internal and intrinsic relationship with the created earth in all its biodiversity. The Bible speaks of the whole creation groaning towards the emergence of a new creation, God’s new family.

The Earth Bible Sermons follow the well-conceptualised and articulated hermeneutical approach that the Earth Bible project offered to read the Bible from earth’s perspective. They are: The Principle of Intrinsic Worth; the Principle of Interconnectedness; the Principle of Voice; the Principle of Purpose; the Principle of Mutual Custodianship; the Principle of Resistance; the Principle of Incarnation; and the Principle of Promise. By doing so, the Earth Bible Sermons serve the purpose of bringing global theological discussions to congregational pulpits of the villages.

The Earth Bible Sermons are a form of pulpit advocacy; calling people to solidarity, networking and the envisioning of a “sustainable community”. They attempt to encourage congregations to articulate ethical bases and to promote transformation through theological foundations in terms of faith perspectives, ethical implications and spiritual engagement. They exhort congregations to understand and discuss the concept of “sustainable community”. What are the basic elements that are required for people to live lives characterised by health, social justice, ecological sustainability, security and spiritual fulfilment? Or in other words, how would we describe what would constitute “sustainable community” locally and globally? What insights do we gain about basic principles for “sustainable community” from Biblical, theological and ethical reflection?

The Earth Bible sermons thus not only help us to hear the Word of God but also enable us to

- hear the call of the Earth.
- believe that caring for life on Earth is a spiritual commitment.
- pray for spiritual support in responding to the call of the Earth.

The Earth Bible sermons are an invitation to our congregations to gather together in fellowship around one table, sharing our human realities and needs, hopefully also gifts of God – even the sacraments; and to discern the needs, the priorities, the values, the visions, the challenges to ourselves as churches, the common call God has given us to be one in our love for one another and the world that God loves so much. Let us share our wisdom, let us listen to the voice of God both in the Scriptures as well as in the words of the other. Let us be the protectors of God’s creation and every living being.

I congratulate the CSI Department of Ecological Concerns, its Hon. Director Prof. Mathew Koshy Pannackad, and the members of the CSI Green Clergy Fellowship for their initiative and commitment in bring out
the Earth Bible Sermons. I commend and hope that you will experience the foretaste of the promise of “peace on earth” as you read and reflect on the Earth Bible Sermons critically and empathetically along with the suffering earth community.

Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda
General Secretary, CSI

Introduction

The Bible Earth Sermons are readings of the Bible from the perspective of the Earth. The Earth Bible edited by Norman C Habel has been brought out by Australian eco theologians to reflect on the question of Biblical hermeneutics from earth perspective. It begins by acknowledging the anthropocentric orientation of the Bible and the problem it poses for an interpretation from the ecological perspective.

The important contribution of the book is in its suggestion of eight eco-justice principles that guide us in our interpretation of the Bible. They are,

1. The Principal of Intrinsic Worth
   The universe, earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.

2. The Principle of Interconnectedness
   Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.

3. The Principle of Voice
   Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.

4. The Principle of Purpose
   The universe is part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.
5. **The Principle of Mutual Custodianship**

Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse earth community.

6. **The Principle of Resistance**

Earth and its components not only differ from injustice at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

7. **The Principle of Incarnation**

8. **The Principle of Promise**

These principles give us a direction in the new reading of the Bible. Here the Earth and its interest will provide the interpretive focus. The book gives examples of the study of several passages making use of the guidelines given by the eco-justice principles. Interpretation on one of the key text, Gen. 1.26-28 is a case in point. Normally it is interpreted as the basis for stewardship- human beings as stewards ruling on behalf of God. The image of stewardship comes from the feudal background; God as an absentee landlord put humans in charge of his property. In our interpretation we tend to assume God as ruler, again a feudal legacy, human beings are rulers of the earth. But the principle of custodianship changes the mode of relationship. ‘Custodianship is a mutual partnership. Earth and Earth community have, in spite of the assumed rulership of humanity, been the custodians of human beings. Earth has provided food, shelter, beauty and many other riches to sustain the body and the spirit of humanity. In return humans have assumed these riches as their right rather than the contribution of their partners in the Earth community”. The important challenge is to read the bible from the perspective of the subjugated earth. The meaning of the text is enriched by this perception of eco-justice. Certainly, this requires a new commitment to the earth and her future. From that commitment we should be prepared to look critically at the text and the biblical interpretation that is accepted as ‘normative’. What we consider normative is often a culture bound reading. For this reason the Earth Bible project asks us to make certain commitments before we begin to interpret the text. These commitments are expressed thus:

- to “acknowledge, before reading the biblical text, that as Western interpreters we are heirs to a long anthropocentric, patriarchal and androcentric approach to reading the text that has devalued Earth and that continues to influence the way we read the text,
- to recognize Earth as a subject in the text with which we seek to relate empathetically rather than as a topic to be analysed rationally;
- to take up the cause of justice for Earth to ascertain whether the Earth and the Earth community are oppressed, silenced or liberated in the biblical text;
- to develop techniques of reading the text to discern and retrieve alternate traditions where the voice of the Earth community has been suppressed.”

The contributors of Earth Bible Sermon Project are the Presbyters of Church of South India (CSI). They studied the Earth Bible volume one and two by attending two workshops held at Ooty and Goa respectively, and are the product of Earth Bible Sermon workshops conducted by the CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns. The Earth Bible Sermons are prepared imagining how Jesus would respond had he faced such an ecological crisis in an Indian background. It will be listening and responding to Bible texts from the standpoint of the Earth. We recognize Earth as a subject in the text with which we seek to relate empathetically rather than as a topic to be analysed rationally.

ISPCK and CSI jointly published the Earth Bible Sermons volume 1 on 8th April 2015. This is the second volume. This book will be a source of inspiration for eco theological work.
Towards a Sustainable Consumption

Mathew Koshy Punnackad

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. 1 Corinthians 12:26

The increasing environmental degradation today is a result of the modern day development slogan, which says: Maximum production, Maximum consumption and Maximum profit. According to this slogan, development is measured in terms of money and profit making. More profit means more benefit and more developmental scope. So production of goods is not based on the need of humanity but rather on their whims and fancies. It has become evident that people are consuming far more natural resources than what the planet can sustainably provide. Many of the Earth’s ecosystems are nearing depletion or irreversible change. By 2050, if current consumption and production patterns continue, and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our ways of living and consumption. It is evident that the rising rates of natural resource use and the resultant environmental impacts are not necessarily a by-product of economic growth. The well-being of humanity, the environment, and the functioning of the economy, ultimately depend upon the judicious and responsible management of the planet’s natural resources. Living sustainably is about doing more and better with less.
While I was addressing children in a School, I asked them about their ambition in life. They said they would like to become a doctor, engineer, advocate, teacher etc. One boy said that he would like to become a veterinary doctor. As it was an unusual answer, I asked him the reason for the choice. He immediately responded: ‘Sir, whatever medicines we give, they will take it without a word. Moreover, these animals will not file a case against the doctor in the consumer forum.’ This is the public attitude towards animals. We fail to understand the intrinsic value of each component and the ecosystem surrounding it. The Universe, Earth and all its components, are a part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has its place. God designed each component to play a role in contributing to the wellbeing of the Earth. The goodness of creation is of value to God and was created with a purpose. Thus, for e.g., Psalm 104 celebrates not only those aspects of creation which serve human needs (crops and domestic animals), but also those that have no immediate connection with human life - the wild places and wild creatures that live there. All components on the Earth are mutually interconnected or dependent on each other for life and survival. Man is not the only species, we share this earth with 80 million other species. The relationship between these species is connected in a complex web of interaction.

People who profess faith in God should discover and acknowledge the contributions that the species and abiotia make to their shared ecosystems. Actions that inhibit their contributions should be identified and prevented. In the web of life, every animal and every plant relies on other plants and animals for survival. All animals and plants in a sense work together to survive. God created the web of life which is interdependent. The loss of one species will break one link in the web which will in effect weaken the whole web. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we read that ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it’. From the eco-theological perspective, Earth is the body of Christ. Each and everything on this Earth, created by God has an intrinsic value, purpose, voice and is interconnected. Earth is a living creature. God created everything, and finally created human beings from the Earth. Human beings are a part of Nature. The relationship between Earth and human beings follows this analogy, and therefore we can-not afford to neglect any of the elements of nature if we want to achieve a sustainable development. Air, Water, land, forests, biodiversity, rivers, mountains, wetlands etc are the essential elements of nature. If any member of God’s creation suffers or becomes extinct, all suffer together with it. The nexus and inter-linkages between all the elements of nature can be rendered intelligible in the context of the biblical idea of interdependence and the relationship between the body and its parts, which Apostle Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12: 26, “one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” Let me explain it with a few examples.

**Mangroves**

The Mangroves were considered as a ‘useless’ vegetation. The conversion of mangrove habitat into tourist resorts, contributed significantly to the catastrophic loss of human lives and settlements during the 2004 tsunami. Mangrove is a group of tropical and specialized trees growing in the saline and brackish water area which the most suitable for feeding, breeding and nursery grounds of these marine organisms and hence important for aquaculture purposes. Mangrove trees offer significant and unique habitat to birds, mammals, and fish populations through a complex marine food chain, creation of breeding habitat, and establishment of restrictive areas that offer protection for maturing offspring. In the past two decades, the entire coastline along the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea, and Strait of Malacca in the Indian Ocean and all along the South Pacific Ocean has been a witness to massive investments in tourism and hotels. But Myanmar and Maldives suffered very less from the killing spree of the tsunami because the tourism industry had so far not spread its tentacles to the virgin mangroves and coral reefs surrounding the coastline. If only the mangroves were intact, the damage from tsunami would have been greatly minimized. It happened earlier in Bangladesh. In 1960, a tsunami wave hit the coast in an area where mangroves were intact and there was not a single human loss. Mangroves, one of the creations of God, has intrinsic value, purpose and is interconnected with other creations. Mangroves are an essential part of the body of Earth. If Mangroves vanish from Earth every part of the Earth will suffer.

**Frogs**

Frogs, the friends of farmers, are an important indicator of the ecosystem. Frogs feed on many insects and pests that frequently destroy the crops.
Also, they are consumed by fish, some large insects, snakes, lizards, larger frogs, birds and small mammals. In the food chain, frogs play a vital role in maintaining a healthy environment. Many of the human activities are unsuitable to frogs and their habitats. We drain the wetlands to get land for cultivation, housing and tourist resorts thereby causing habitat destruction. The extinction of frogs, will result in the multiplication of mosquitoes and other insects which will spread fatal diseases. Frogs are a wonderful creation of God, which have an intrinsic value, a purpose, and an interconnection between other creations.

Bees
Bees visit the flowers of plants and take nectar and use it to make honey. While the bee is collecting nectar, it gets a powder on it called pollen. Bees fly from one flower to the next, carrying this pollen, which falls into the flowers, and the plants use that to reproduce! The plant helps the bees, and the bees in turn help the plants.

Grass
The majority of people consider the grass which is growing on the ground, as useless. In order to avoid the growth of the grass, some may spray herbicides. If we clear the grass from the surface of the Earth it will grow within a short period. Normally the majority of people don’t know the intrinsic value, purpose and interconnectedness of grass. If the grass is not there on the surface of the Earth, the Sun’s rays will fall directly on the surface of the Earth and heat energy from the Sun will be transferred directly to the earth. As a result of the disappearance of moisture, microorganisms will die, which will result in desertification. This is an irreversible process. If the grass was there, sunlight will not fall on the surface of Earth. The grass will convert the heat energy from Sun to chemical energy. In other words, photosynthesis will take place and carbohydrates will be produced which is a food for all animals. God created grass as a blanket over our dear Earth; it is neither waste nor useless. It is a wonderful creation of God.

Sun
The energy in living things originates from the sun. Green plants are the only living organisms that can use the energy from the sun to make food, which can be used by the plant itself or by animals that eat the plant. If people/animals eat the plant, they get energy from the sugar in the plant. But people cannot hold out their hands to the sun and make food in the same way that the plant makes food in its leaves.

Holy Spirit
We are reluctant to acknowledge the intrinsic value, purpose and interconnectedness of each component in the universe. Each component of God’s creation has a voice. We are unwilling to hear the voices of God’s creations, communicating to each other in their own language. Why is it not possible for us to understand the language of communication of each species. In Acts chapter 2 we read; “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” When the Holy Spirit comes upon us we will be able to understand the language of plants, animals and other components of earth. The presence of the Holy spirit will enable us to understand the language of other creations of God and we will respect the integrity of creation.

Conclusion
An amazing variety of habitats, people, plants, and animals are all interconnected in a fragile web of life we call “biodiversity.” And every member is essential in keeping this web in balance. About 1.4 million species have been identified, and researchers estimate that millions more are yet to be identified. Everything created by God has a purpose and nothing in the universe is neither waste nor useless. Thousands of species may be vanishing each year as a result of pollution, over-harvesting, habitat degradation, and other human actions which will affect the other creations.
Hence, Apostle Paul describes “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.” If one part of God’s creation suffers or vanishes from Earth every part suffers. Let us conserve the Earth, the body of Christ with great and reverential care.

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Learning From Failures

K. Selvan Maharaja

1 Kings 5:1-8

Introduction

We should discern the fundamental truth and learn from our own past decisions, policies and other agreements. Policy denotes varied connotations in different contexts. Trade policy of the British led India into the shackles of colonization. Mahatma Gandhi’s Ahimsa policy attracts many even today. A policy can be typically described as a principle or rule to guide decisions and it should not affect anyone.

Evaluating the Treaties of the Present

Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP) is currently operating at Koodankulam, the coastal area of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. The inter-Governmental agreement was signed by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on November 20, 1988 with the Russian Government. Due to the political breakdown in Russia they stopped the work and again in 1998 it was resumed. There has been considerable struggle to stop this project due to the fear of nuclear pollution. When the United States opposed the agreement on the grounds that it did not meet the requirement of the Nuclear Supplies Group (NSG), Russia countered that the Koodankulam deal was originally signed in 1988 and therefore was not subject to the 1992 NSG guidelines.
The Church has expressed solidarity with the agitation and has fully backed the protest for a genuine cause. The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) initiated an email campaign that requested the central cabinet to pass a resolution against the project. The Church of South India (CSI) expressed concern over the huge radioactive accumulations at the plant site which may be the principal causes of environmental and health hazards. Protesters quoted examples like Russia's Chernobyl, Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor disaster, and France's Marcoule and questioned the risk in having a nuclear power plant.

Nuclear power plants pollute the environment by releasing radioactive radiations. It cannot be compared with other forms of pollution. The primary recipients of the pollution will be the environment and the people who are dependent on that. The after effects of the radiation will be for countless generations. The marine life also will be affected by the nuclear waste and the water discharged from the nuclear reactors into the Bay of Bengal. On the promise of job opportunities, agricultural land was taken for building up of the plant. But now people have been asked to move a radius of 15 Kilometres away from the plant. They restricted the sea area too and fishermen are not allowed to go fishing in that area. The livelihood of the people in Koodankulam has been affected. The lands in that area are now being sold out at a very cheap rate. The nuclear radiations generated may damage the surroundings and affect the people and posterity, because of the agreement made by the Indian Government with the Russian Government. Koodankulam plant may solve the rising energy needs but the people are likely to be affected by the radioactive radiation which is more dangerous than the benefits they may receive.

Treaties in the Hebrew Scriptures denote covenants made between God and human beings. Treaties can be contracted between individuals, or larger groups, or states. Treaties are made on the one hand in mutual commitment and on the other by forceful commands. The treaty made by Solomon in 1 Kings 5 is a mutual commitment and the Hebrew word used here for treaty has a political tone. The two biblical narratives (1 Kings 5: 1-8 and 2 Chr. 2: 1 – 16) talk about the treaty between Solomon and Hiram, but differs very much with regard to Solomon's relationship with King Hiram. 1 Kings 5: 1 reports that Hiram made the initial contact with Solomon after his ascension to the throne. The Chronicler credits, Solomon initiating the transaction for raw materials and skilled labour necessary for the building of the temple. Scholars suggested that the Chronicler account have been edited to the veneration of Solomon.

I would like to bring two important aspects from the 1 Kings accounts and from contemporary experiences.

Solomon's Frailty: Revisiting the Treaties of the Past
In the book of 1 Kings, Solomon is remembered as the king during whose reign the temple was built. In the read passage, Solomon makes a treaty with Hiram in order to get the fine timber and skilled workmen for building the temple. Solomon has an ambition to build a temple in Jerusalem, a dream that David had and did not fulfil. For that Solomon successfully negotiates a deal with King Hiram of Phoenicia that secures building material for the project. Solomon had a special interest in horses and chariots. Also military personnel were camped in important routes for security with supplies of food and arms. Solomon violated the Law of Moses not only by marrying many wives and also by multiplying horses and depending on chariots (Deut. 17: 14-17). Hiram had sent his greetings during Solomon's coronation. Solomon, in turn, seizes the opportunity to do business with Hiram.

Solomon had sent back official thanks and a request for his help in the construction of the temple. Hiram accepted the invitation and promised Solomon help by giving him timber for the construction, a commercial agreement; Solomon's letter was really a commercial contract, for in it he offered to pay for the wood by providing food annually for Hiram's household (5: 11), and also to pay the workers one large payment for their labour (1 Chron. 2: 10). Solomon appointed twelve officers in charge of twelve districts, who had to take turns for providing food and other things for Solomon and for “all who came to king Solomon's table”. In addition, to that, the officers must also provide quotas of barley and straw for the king's animals. Warren W. Wiersbe writes that, “Indeed, when it came to labour and taxes, Solomon did indeed put a heavy yoke on the people”. Scholars argue that everyone wonders whether Solomon will make use of the divine gifts.

It is important to note that the cost of this treaty is too high. Solomon is obliging Israel by providing nearly 130 thousand bushels of wheat along with about 20 cors of fine olive oil. Solomon's enormous yearly payment
of wheat would have supplied his own house for seven months. Moreover, this was not just a one-time payment. Verse 11 says, “Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year”. Though the treaty was made between the kings, the people were the sufferers. We do not know how many years this contract continued, but we are certain of the burden placed upon Israel. King Solomon has risked compromising the livelihood, well-being and sustenance of the people.

Solomon’s intention to build a temple for God represents neither personal piety nor the thoughtful provision of divine availability, to any Israelite whose heart and hands would turn towards the Temple Mount. In fact, the temple was one of the largest and most beautiful structures in Ancient West Asia. The construction of the temple has been seen as the by-product of Davidic and Solomonic political might. Solomon did not consider the people while he formulated the public policies. As a result, after the death of Solomon people asked Solomon’s successor Rehoboam to lighten the yoke which Solomon had made on the people.

Policy making

The policies, decisions and agreements made by Solomon ended with the suffering of the people during his reign. The Indian Government made an agreement in 1988, but people are protesting against it even today. As pastors and leaders what is our responsibility towards policy making? Policies are good development. But unfortunately these policies are detrimental to the stake holders. When Solomon made the agreement with Hiram, his only aim was to build the temple and he was not bothered about the people. The agreement forced the twelve officials of Solomon to pay more for the royal household. It is clearly evident when Solomon’s son Rehoboam was anointed as the King of Israel, people approached Rehoboam and asked him to lighten the heavy burden which his father made on them.

Likewise, when the treaty was made between India and Russia, the Indian Government promised the people to take the necessary steps to ensure safety. But sadly, the nuclear plant fails to follow the guidelines of 1992 Nuclear Supplies Group and now the government is trying to propagate the merits of nuclear power. The common mass is always the victim of policy making – whether it was in Solomon’s period or in the 21st century. The leaders want to gain credit at the expense of the common man. Behind every celebrated project and historical construction there will be undoubtedly, the common man’s tale of woe.

When policies are made they fail to see the ones who are all affected by this. They consider only the people who will be benefited by the policies. As present and future leaders of Church and organisations, it is our responsibility to make policies when the chance is given to us, but before making policies we have to be clear about the positive and negative aspects. A clear idea is required about how far the policies may work for the welfare of the people. Also we need to be aware of the investment made on policies, whether it will be a burden for the people? The treaties that we make must consider all these things for the betterment of the Church and Society at large. May God enable us to be faithful in policy making.

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Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:38-42

Introduction

There is always an inherent inconsistency in us, the human beings talking ‘for’ something or someone else. Perhaps we may unintentionally subdue the ‘real’ voice of the subject and voice our own convictions as the real. This ideological and methodological aberration can also happen to the environmental activists and Eco theological movements. Therefore, as a pre script, we the preachers of eco justice must constantly be conscious of the anthropocentric notions inherent in our perception of the other, especially in the case of nature and the earth. It is essential for us to be-in-harmony with the whole ecosystem in order to feel and experience the real pain of the earth. An “earth-perspective” is unavoidable for every interpreter of the sacred scripture. Bio diversities that define the essence and existence of the earth face the threat of extinction due to extensive human activities, although it is vital for humanity to survive. We have completely depended on the provision of nature and the goodness of the earth from times immemorial and this inter-dependence between us and the environment is attested by both our scientific and spiritual insights. Such inter-dependence has been strained due to the exploitative interactions from man, to uncritically approach nature and its resources to cater to the consumerist tastes of affluence. Humanity’s craving for more than essential resulted in a corporate phenomenon called “over-exploitation of natural resources”. Our interactions with the environment and the entire eco system are the defining factors of economics. Every human contact with nature has an economic aspect inscribed in it. Epistemologically, the Greek term for household, oikos, serves as the foundation for the relative discourses on economics, ecology and ecumenism. Therefore from the beginning itself our existence on the earth is economically accelerated. Unfortunately, the shifts in our thinking and perceptions have adversely affected both humanity and the earth. The post-colonial and neo-imperial scenario of globalization, through attempts to decolonize the colonial and imperial impact on the colonized, rampant in this era, operates mostly on an economic theory of unprecedented exploitation of the other, including nature. The earth and its natural diversities have become the worst casualty in the age of corporate greed and destructive developmental experiments. Both renewable and non-renewable resources of the earth have been reduced and we are at a time, where humanity is expected to pay-back or give back to nature, so that, nature may be restored in its fullness. We cannot be insensitively optimistic on the question of diminishing resources, even if we invent new ways and alternatives to the non-renewable resources, for we are at the worst impact of environmental degradation. This problem finds much prominence in India especially in the backdrop of the ongoing struggles of the environmental activists against sand and rock mining and prevalence of sand and quarry mafias. As an environmentally committed community, in terms of our faith, we need to propose a scriptural and spiritual consciousness to the society for the sustainability of the earth as she is the fountain source of all existence.
An Economy of Feminist Household (Lk 10:38-42)

This very special and unique episode of Jesus’ interaction with two female characters, particularly sisters namely Martha and Mary, in their household is part of evangelist Luke’s theological concern to prefer the role of women in the ministry of the early church and model for Christian discipleship. The absence of Lazarus from this whole narrative is significant and in fact textually highlights the feminist nature of the event. Jesus’ involvement in the discussion has to be seen not from a patriarchal or androcentric view point, rather Jesus as a friend of women and a representative of authentic humanhood which creatively direct the story into a meaningful conclusion. The traditional scholarship on this text has kept both these sisters in a dualistic or paradoxical realm in order to venerate one over the other. In that effort often Martha and her representative character is victimized. In other words, Mary is idealized and venerated at the cost of Martha. Certainly, we see Mary as a liberated woman from the traditional space of household responsibilities, a male chauvinistically defined feminine character, who participates with Jesus and proves her proximity with the Torah. In such contexts of interpretations, it is imperative for the contemporary readers to liberate our sisters from the prisons of idealization. The hermeneutics of suspicion fundamentally untie both our sisters, Martha and Mary, from their contest for honour and thereby they are de-patriarchalized and de-idealized. Keeping all these diverse approaches to the text, in the already described ecological and environmental context of over exploitation of nature and earth resources and the ongoing impact of climate change, the culminative discharge of Jesus to be conscious of the limits of humanity in terms of their need, finds priority for our interpretation. Their difference in approach basically suggests a new sense of spirituality that considers life at the margins and inculcates a culture of sustainable consumption and just attitude to the market.

A Spirituality of Contemplative Dynamism

As we have seen in the case of the sisters, Martha and Mary, the text Luke 10:38-42 considers the experiences of both the characters as common ground for Jesus to make his comment on the question of hospitality. Martha’s attempts to accept and receive Jesus as a representative of a new and egalitarian era which is inaugurated in and through the mission and ministry, of Jesus, gains special attention in the light of the preceding narratives of the ‘mission of the seventy’ and the parable of ‘the Good Samaritan’. Both emphatically reinstate the diaconal aspect of Christian discipleship. Martha’s activism or more specifically dynamism of discipleship serves as a central point for the episode. However, her perceptual mistake of idealizing her domain of diaconia can be forgiven, since the conventional biblical scholarship has been idealized as contemplative mode of Mary. We consider the common nature of their spirituality, the spirituality of Martha and Mary, in order to define the inclusive face of the spirituality of contemplative dynamism. This serves as both the theology and praxis of eco-feminism. The economic phenomenon of over-exploitation of the earth and her resources as developmental practice, perhaps we would say, a dominant and imperial developmental paradigm, needs to be ideologically encountered in learning or pedagogical level. The local faith communities are to be taught or ideologically equipped to participate in the struggles for the life of the earth. Mary’s choice of the better part includes the aspect of contemplative dynamism for contemporary earth spirituality.

A Spirituality of Sharing the Pains

Martha’s quest for assistance from Mary (vs.40, 41), in fact needs to be seen as her invitation for just participation. The narrative states that Martha is worried and concerned about the household matters and Mary seems unconcerned about it. She is sensitive to the self and also to others. It is again a patriarchal reflection to see Martha as worrying and therefore worthy of rebuke. Having concern for the world around us cannot be belittled. Furthermore, Jesus does not rebuke her or put her down for having such concern. Martha becomes a discipleship paradigm of Jesus’ willingness to share the pain of the world. She represents an economy that considers the women’s experience of subordination and exclusion in the traditional system of discourse. Mostly, such historical experiences of women are devalued and undervalued in the economic relations of the society. Martha’s worries and distraction may also be viewed as environmentalists’ deep commitment to the cause of the planet earth. It is prophetic to lament the existing patterns of human approach to the nature and its resources. We need to be worried and bothered about the present and future of the earth. It is the inevitable responsibility of the faith community to share pain of the earth as their own and empathetically
voice the concerns of nature. Conscientising the developmental strategists on their historical misconceptions and organizing the grass root level communities to share the groaning of the earth is vital for contextual spiritual interventions.

**A Spirituality of Limits**

The concluding statement of Jesus in verse 42 essentially points to a focused life in terms of discipleship. The many things that Martha was distracted with are not specifically dictated in the text. Jesus proposes a limit or a border line in relation to our needs. Especially this statement is important in an era of the moral economy of the limited goods. Economy in antiquity, particularly the proletarian communities strictly held this view when they relate with the nature. They considered the accumulated excess of goods as the right of the other. Hence Jesus’ comment becomes meaningful in such an ecological economy. It is the tendency of the market to intimidate us with many things. The danger is deeper than we perceive especially in the context of increasing environmental disorders and disasters. Close analysis reveals that human beings are living beyond their means both economically and ecologically. We are abusing needs and the planet together with an insatiable appetite that is not sustainable. Lucrative life styles and affluence trigger the distortive reactions of the nature. Therefore, the scripture suggests an alternative approach of economy for a sustainable earth community. It is a theological imperative to consume less and sustain the earth for our future generations.

**Conclusion**

We were trying to read the triangular debate of Martha, Mary and Jesus in their feminine household in the light of the environmental degradation as well as the impacts of over exploitation of the earth and her resources. An environmental spirituality or earth spirituality that encourages the faith communities to engage in the context with a sense of contemplative dynamism, empathetic pain-sharing and economy of limits, is integral to developmental discourses. As basic faith communities who are committed to the eco-justice and sustainable consumption we need to actively participate in the earth protection activities and involve in the struggles to bring integrity to the earth.

**Bibliography**


The Righteous Saves His Cattle

Immanuel Koilppillai

Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast.

Prov 12.10

The government of India has come up with special economic zones in our country. Under this scheme a particular area of land has been allocated for a multinational tyre company in a village called Thervoy Kandigai in the Thiruvallur district of Tamilnadu, which was formerly grazing land for generations, and according to the government records, wasteland. Consequently, people have lost their source of livelihood.

Likewise, in many other parts of our country, open grasslands that help cattle to survive have been transformed into economic zones in the name of development. The parish that I am serving now is located in the southern frontier of Andhra Pradesh in the midst of 25 other villages. Through my survey, which is based on demography and biodiversity, I have found out that the cattle has been struggling for grass and so people are selling their cattle at low prices to meat vendors. The availability of fodder grass is almost 0% during the summer season. The elders in these villages testify that this has not been the way it has been so far because they used to have fodder grass available all through the year. One may quickly jump to the conclusion that the failure of monsoon and change of climate could be the reasons for the decline of grasslands. But the true reason is this: the changing global economy pressurizes the farmer to give more importance to grow money-yielding crops than seasonal crops. The motive of producing food for the entire society has started to decline, whereas production for profit has become the motive in our present-day market-oriented economy. Earlier, farmers produced crops that catered to basic human necessity. That’s why crops were harvested according to the climate and other conducive factors pertaining to that particular region. Some crops have been suitable only to particular places (e.g., sugar cane, banana) due to climatic variations. However, currently we are seeing people grow anything and everything in any soil condition. The invention of drop water irrigation system and other modernized trends of agriculture have changed the quality of crops, which ultimately helps farmers to gain more profit. Often we hear about the failure of crops due to flood and drought, which happens because the newly introduced crops are unable to survive in the new atmosphere. The time has come to realize that by enhancing agricultural techniques, we have been only losing our potentiality in our long-standing traditional agricultural practices.

This problem has been spreading everywhere in our country like plague. Constantly grasslands are getting converted into sugarcane, eucalyptus and casuarina plantations. One can justify this act as a part of the economic development, but there is an ethical imbalance within the subject matter. Proverbs 12.10 says “righteous protects or covers his cattle” which directly connects the cattle rearing with ethics. When we take a closer look at this verse, we can get three basic ecological as well as ethical insights.

1. Righteous- The One Who Protects God’s Creation:
The Book of Proverbs coins a new terminology for the cattle grower, which is quite unheard-of in these days. Why does the book of Proverbs call them righteous? A deeper analysis will reveal more insights into this. The righteous in the Proverbs is the one who walks in the light of God and helps others also to find the way to eternal life. Here Solomon extends the terminology “righteous” to the cattle growers, not because of their moral acts but because of their ethical mind sets. The present-day scenario may motivate us to think that cattle growing may be a profitable business, but we must understand that it requires lots of care and effort. This makes Solomon call them righteous because he knows how a farmer-cum-cattle
grower helps to sustain the creation of God. Cattle-rearing had been a full-time profession of the Dalits and Adivasis along with agriculture for many generations. One can’t imagine a Dalit farmer without cattle. Cattle means life to them which they view with dignity. This is evident at the time of festivals especially, Pongal. The rationale behind this is simple; cattle help the vegetation to flourish. The dung of domestic cattle (not imported varieties) carries high nutritive values, which the soil requires and naturally helps the land to remain fertile for generations.

Even though the so-called upper caste people have more cattle, they require the help of Dalits to rear them. Recently, these landless herdsmen were forced to travel several kilometers in search of grass. The nearby grass resources have been converted into agricultural lands where these landless farmers are forced to sell out their cattle for a very low price. The market economy calls cattle as “poor man’s ATM machine” because any time you can get money. But it is more than that; every Dalit farmer’s life has been directly connected with the life of their cattle. By tending to their cattle, farmers actually help the biodiversity to remain intact.

Nature lovers and biologists advise the villagers to rear more cattle to sustain the balance of nature. The dung of cattle restores the land which has been poisoned by chemical fertilizers and pesticides. For this reason, Proverbs calls the cattle growers as righteous because they accomplish the commandment of God. It is the duty of humanity to till and keep the land, which has been given as a gift from God.

Currently, there is much discussion on bio-diversity and other climate-related issues which our ancestors had ages ago. We must re-kindle our ancestral knowledge of nature towards the creation of God. We must redefine the aspect of spirituality that one can be sanctified as righteous not only by his or her faith but by his/her service towards humanity and to the creation of God in a broader perspective.

2. Righteous - One Who Merges With God’s Creation

The “back to nature” slogan has captured the attention of the general public who realize the importance of preserving nature. Ecologists suggest that farmers use organic fertilizers. Throughout the centuries, cattle have been providing the best organic manure to farmers. Having more land is to have more profit; this is the same with cattle as well. The economic growth in the recent past has forgotten the poor; even the so-called Green Revolution has led to marketization of agro products rather than safeguarding the life of the farmers. Thomas Chilikulam S.J points out that, “objectification and commoditization of land and natural resources are the immediate fall out of a global economy.” A landless farmer who loves his cattle and lives with nature takes nothing out of modern inventions. Without following any educative principles, Dalit farmers have been conducting themselves in the stream of organic agriculture, which does not disrupt our eco-system. Living with cattle gives the hope of living with the creation. That’s what the Bible says in Genesis 2.19, where God brought all animals and birds to Adam to name them, which emphasizes the bond between God’s creation and human beings. Scientific inventions and modern marvels have compelled humanity to forget that we are also a part of God’s creation. We try to dominate creation in order to subdue it. But here the scripture talks about the righteous who communicates and makes a bond with God’s creation, in order to sustain it.

3. Righteous - The one who lives with God’s creation

So friends, let us take a deeper look at ourselves and ask, Am I righteous before God? Jesus came into the world to save sinners and to make them righteous. Before that one has to go through the process of transformation. If we believe that we have received the grace of God, then we must have gone through the transformative experience of becoming righteous. Our thought pattern must undergo an attitudinal change in order to understand the ecological order which was established by God.

How are we looking at God’s creation? Still if we look at the creation with attitude of supremacy and only as a commodity, then we must change our attitude. We must learn to be at peace with God’s creation. We must consider ourselves part of the earth, plants, animals, etc. We must be open enough to listen to the voice of God, which comes through other living forms.

If we believe in this concept that God reveals Himself even through other living beings, then we must have the ethical mindset to accept the life system on our earth, which has been gifted by God. Then we must allow the cattle to thrive along with us in order to maintain the eco-balance.
Let us listen to the cry of the cattle that shares our living space; let us cultivate the heart to protect grasslands in our villages to keep our mother earth green and fertile to provide happiness to millions and millions of the other living beings. One must constantly remind oneself that we are not alone on this earth to dominate over it, but we are called to share the space and to lead a harmonious life with all life forms. Keeping all these things in mind, Solomon rightly categorizes the term ‘righteous’ - the one that lives and adores God’s creation. Let us have a green heart to restore the green earth. Amen.

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The Call of Second Noah

Devanand Subuddy Kummithi

Chapter 12 of Jeremiah is one of the major Prophet’s confrontations to bring back and restore the heritage of the earth by uprooting those that make the earth mourn; grass and herbs wither, beasts and birds consumed to sweep away. Paradoxically, the first Noah was called by God to go and bring back the heritage with restoration, whereas the prophet here as a Second Noah calls upon God to devour those who deal very treacherously and deceitfully towards the earth and its heritage. But God rebukes Jeremiah’s impatience and also blames him and his household along with the shepherding leaders for their act of degradation of the heritage. Finally he gets a promise to bring back every prodigal producer and farmer to their heritage and to their land by making them hear and obey God, who maintains the intrinsic balance of the earth.

Today, everywhere mother earth has a story of ecological and environmental degradation and imbalance. And everywhere there is a need of a Noah to listen to God and obey in bringing back prodigal farmers to restore the heritage of the earth with proper ecological ethics. Especially, the shepherds as the leaders of the church should rise as a second Noah to identify the local degradation by prodigal farmers with the green ethics.
Patrick Curry proposes his ethics and according to the review of his book, it is:

Focusing first on the major concepts of ethics - religious and secular - and value, Curry then examines the gradations of ecological ethics. He discusses light green, shallow or anthropomorphic ethics with the examples of stewardship, lifeboat ethics, and social ecology; mid-green or intermediate ethics represented by animal liberation/rights and biocentrism; and dark green, deep, or ecocentric ethics. The concluding chapters of his book discuss green ethics as post-secular, moral pluralism and pragmatism, green citizenship, and human population in the light of ecological ethics.

Having an idea of all these terms makes one to understand that the ethics of the day is in a state of imbalance and degradation of our environment and eco-systems that cause a dangerous catastrophe for our future generations, who lose their local and traditionally rich habitations.

For example, in the Rayalaseema diocese, a village called “Korapadu”, etymologically the name means “the hamlet of foxtail millets”, was famous for the produce of foxtail millets through its traditional agriculture. Five or seven generations ago, this agriculture of foxtail millets gradually withered and people switched on to the practice of cash crops with foreign seeds and saplings to grow cotton and paddy. Consequently, the local traditional food habits and the people’s immunity towards several diseases like diabetes were lost. The land also lost its local birds like sparrows, honey birds and doves. Jordon Courser (’Kalivi Kodi’ in Telugu language) has become extinct in Lankamalla forests. Kundu River, a tributary of river Penna, has become a small drainage canal at Korapadu.

**Between the Heart and the Mouth**

According to Jeremiah, the gap between the heart and the mouth is the root cause of all the environmental degradation. It is not only in Korapadu but also everywhere on the earth. Oblivious of the relationship between the ecological and economical ethics, farmers devour the eco-system producing environmental imbalance and degradation. They destroy the traditional crops with the cash crops and they replace the natural farming with chemical farming that harms the earth. (Vs.2)

People do this knowingly because in their general discussions on agriculture and farming, they generally say, “natural farming is healthy but time consuming and it is hard with less profit. Whereas chemical farming with cash crops is very easy, less working, fast yielding, more yielding and more profitable. Though the land gets infertile, it could be cured with more chemicals again”.

Likewise, every mouth talks good about environmental and agricultural care but every heart is in need of an economy which is very very high even to satisfy the immediate primary needs of food, health, education and occupation. Our heritage, therefore, could not become a pet to love but it becomes a lion in the forest to hate it with fear. (Vs.8). The call of second Noah is not only for a restoration of environmental and ecological balance but also for technological and economical balance.

All living beings need sufficient resources to exist in this eco-system. Productions of science, technology and the natural resources should provide sufficient and affordable products to all in proportion to the health of the environment and ecosystems. If the productions are insufficient the standard of life without such products should improve rather than having a life with products that are produced from natural resources causing uneven distribution and eco-degradation.

**The Pulpit’s Call**

The call for an economical balance is “proper distribution with proper governance of all the resources and proper restoration of all the beings by both religious and social bodies”. The shepherds of religion and the leaders of society made the farmers of the fields and the producers of science and technology to trample on God’s creation for selfish motives. The wonderful creation of God has become a desolate wilderness under these selfish farmers and producers as they were not properly taught and guided by the religious leaders and society. (Vs. 10 - 12.)

God has created everything in balance with indigenous birds and beasts, trees and plants, grass and herbs, mountains, valleys and plains, rivers seas and oceans along with the skies. Everything produces sufficiently and all that is produced should be evenly distributed to all. And that’s the reason
Jesus taught the prayer saying, “give us this day our daily bread”. This prayer depicts the provision of food sufficiency not only for all the human beings but also for the entire universe. God answers the prayer and gives us all with sufficiency but we fail to distribute them properly because of selfishness. Tissa Balasurya also writes about balance saying, Nature as a whole is self-governing, self-propagating, maintaining itself in a wonderful balance of beginnings and endings, of movement and relationships. … The earth is given to humanity for its sustenance; the human race in turn is to develop the earth, to bring out its potential through human activity.

Religion and Society today should transform the leaders. Leaders are meant to give leadership not for human beings alone but also for all the creatures in the eco-systems. Prodigal pastors should come back from their anthropocentric and economical values of self and teach the prodigal producers the ethics of preserving, sustaining and restoring the earth and the entire universe. The pulpit’s call should be based on the three successful views of environmental ethics; 1. Biocentric ethics are those that give intrinsic value to all the individuals of the universe 2. Ecocentric ethics are those that give intrinsic value to the entirety of the eco system 3. The theory of deep ecology and ecofeminism are those that propose an approach to the environment as an entity that we are in relationship with and should be cared for.

De learning the Baal’s way
Baal’s ways are born with anthropomorphisms of understanding God not only in the understanding of creation but also creating a God in the understanding of known selfishness. Even in our present ways of understanding GOD without the view of environmental ethics becomes nothing but the absence of truth about God, who cares and sustains. Therefore, we have our Jeremiah’s call for a second Noah to swear by God’s name saying, “As the Lord Lives”. The way the human beings were taught to make their Baal with selfish motives to worship, the same way there should be a teaching for all the people to know their God, who has made everything in balance for all to swear upon and live the life of worship in obedience and distribute all the produces in balance. (Vs.16).

An attitudinal change like, “God is for all the humans only and moreover God is my personal saviour”, to the belief systems like, “God is for the entire creation and the saviour of all the eco systems in the universe with balance” is something that could define to de learn Baal and learn God’s Way. Despite the personal prosperity of the human beings it is essential for them to have the earth, the sky and the universe that provides existence to them without catastrophe. Thus humans should take the lead to save the creation not only for themselves, but also on behalf of the entire universe; being a voice for the entire creation as the second Noah.

Towards this freedom call for a balanced distribution of resources from the ecosystems and science and technology, let our people as the producers of products from resources awake. Towards this freedom struggle for the preservation, sustenance and restoration, let the shepherds and leaders of the religions and of the society awake. Towards this freedom for the self-control in the standard of life even without products of the world, let all the human beings as second Noah awake with ethics and prayers to surrender all to God, As the Lord Lives. Amen.

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Genesis 3:1-14

Introduction

One for fruit, next for water and the last for food! This is about three small containers having been brought into action in my vicinity and globally. Without much ado, let me affirm that the first one goes to the migratory birds seated inches away from my hand’s reach, second finds its way to not-so-far banana farming and the third to our backyard, an asylum for two abandoned puppies. All three, assorted in their own form and constitution, voiceless and unobserved at the hands of human, now wait upon the mother earth, their perpetual companion on whom their faith dwells. One can label this as a nature conservation act. If not me, then the earth would set up its surrogates to respond to the cry of the voiceless. One such was the probable growth at the ornamental green Garden of Eden, from the very moment it was handed out to the first earthling or community. For that was the diktat of God.

Definition of Materialization and Re-fertilization

If the term Ecology and economy, originates from the Greek word “Oikos” (home or household), then for a better environment, the art of our residence
atmosphere (ecology) must draw a parallel with our residence possession (economy). Thus in a residence possession or household, the fruit plucked only for himself, his garden or his house, is irrefutably a material problem. For on that fruit, others too have an equal right to bite. And now if that same fruit of the residence possession or household is plucked for his neighbor, his next garden-keeper or for another house, it could be phrased as re-fertilization, for in this act, the soil and its finished-product; ‘the fruit’ is honored. Thus in the words of the writer, ‘Re-fertilization is a belief, upheld only by those who have experienced the wrath of materialization and the eventuality of its existence’.

Historical setting
The author of the first book authentically declares in Genesis 2:8, “And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east”. Many commentaries state that ‘eden’ means delight, finery or luxury (2 Samuel 1:24). In Arabic, Eden is “‘Adn,” which means fixed residence or everlasting abode of the faithful. The garden illustrated in the text was endowed with two extraordinary trees, four potent rivers, a mammoth heap of gold, bdellium and onyx, so rich in coveted resource that the first humans liked to confiscate it, akin to the sand and estate mafias of present time. To put a ceiling on the human mind, God set boundaries for him on earth. Thus, it was the mission of the first earthling to identify those boundaries and dwell in it. But here, because of their doggedness to assert pre-eminence over the earth and nature, a deliberate and dystopian condition was going to unfold. An unsophisticated confirmation; Ecology was going to run dry.

Genesis Chapter 3, which we are acquainted with, has always come up with the fall, original Sin, separation, curse, iniquity and noncompliance. No doubt, this would always be legitimate doctrines in some contexts. But in this case, it might needlessly detain our appraisal and survey if we begin with those annotations and slots. Second we would leaf through the literary context, for when by doing so, it would furnish us with obvious connotation and explanation. Thirdly, we would see this story from an earth perspective and accordingly develop the terms, argument, themes and motifs based on it. In this approach, the first principle of Earth Bible Project voicing the intrinsic worth of the earth and all creation is dealt herewith. The following eco-justice angles are explored to re-fertilize the Theo-garden by de-materializing the acts committed by the first earthling:

The artifact of cosmic powers (verse 6)
Fruit, the zenith of the plant kingdom, happens only when it receives sunlight from above and rain from earth. This coming together of two cosmic powers, sun and earth, to produce the fruit that men of that time need, stands in contrast to the lesson given by the market trend.

Here in v 6, at its very first bite, the purpose of being a fruit was accomplished. It says, ‘their eyes were opened’. And that is what a fruit does to those whose minds are closed. Being a living organism, it opens their eye and paves a clear highway, on which now the humans could walk. Forlornly, after receiving the vital knowledge from the first bite, instead of divulging their error, the first earthling made the first-fruit lawfully liable for their fall. In all its veracity, for the human beings know now that it was not the fruit that brought about the fall but the eye of the beholder, who couldn’t resist himself from falling to the exquisiteness of the fruit. And that was the case with the forbidden fruit. Meanwhile, they forgot the bare fact that plucking the fruit before the harvest could end their relationship with God, with nature, with the land and even with generations to come. Here when they plucked the fruit, the first humans’ brooded over only about themselves, just like our present market-policy-movement which teaches us, “Me and my family”.

Then and now, in every type of garden, those who have an abundance of fruit are called to share. The greatest peccadillo that the first earthlings did was their bite; a bite that everyone had the right upon. Instead of plucking the fruit, if the humans had remained in the garden’s lap, progressively, they would have become as priceless as gold. Fruit for tomorrow, thus open up vistas that reach beyond the horizon of nourishment.

Conserve the dynamism of theo-garden (verse 7)
In Genesis 2:15, “God told the man to dress it and to keep it”. As we could see that the first humans were called to dress and keep the garden, but quite opposed to that pronouncement, they attempted to get twice the outcome from the garden, in half the time. As its upshot, the purity in it got wrecked. This uncultivated first soil found in God’s Garden in all its originality had almost a mystic and incarnate essence, which had the propensity to transform any material, then and forevermore. If they could have dressed
the first garden, it would have taught them invaluable lessons of divine worth, fairly like the one we witness in the subsequently lines.

First he would have learnt that his long years on earth, is nothing but a resurrection, revolution and transformation of his body, just like a leaf, branch, trunk or fruit that sinks into the green earth to come up in another form. The second overriding secret that caught their nerves was that, “The nature was the supreme philanthropist of all times” It made the earthling to transform themselves to that higher calling of benevolence, instead of looking at and depending upon the worldly philanthropist with an eye of expectation. Thirdly, not unlike nature, the first couples learnt that they could in their immediate bodies (like trunk of a tree) hold only what they could manage, in their extended bodies (branches of a tree) acquire only what they could possess and in their absolute bodies (fruit of a tree) should contribute more than they could. The fourth lesson became all the more enlightening to them. For it says that the garden digests the organic waste to produce something stunning. For in God’s great economy too, nothing goes to waste. Fifthly, the first humans missed to see visibly how a garden fosters the all-pervading connection between the animate and inanimate, paving way for a more habitable home. Miserably, they botched to monitor these functions of their first garden, similar to the garden of today that function as a marketplace to extract nepotism from the fiends of this ecosphere.

Creature redeems the earth community (verse 14-15)

This would be the fifth serpent, left unhurt by me. For there is a reason behind that doing! Seeing serpent talking (before the birth of Balaam’s speaking donkey), an unusual episode, would definitely have put the first earthling on toes. But it didn’t happen in that manner. All the more, they took unlimited attention in the monologue of the serpent and in all its reality they cheerfully agreed to do what the creature said, without much ado. To clear some basic doubts, let us without any prejudices, reread this whole affair from the first principle of Earth Bible view.

In “El’s Holy Torah”, Dr. Malachi Z. York states that in Hebrew, the term “nachash” used for serpent, simply means “a whisperer” than an existent individual. As we know, a whisper is just a reverberation, an echo or sound, heard but not seen. And that noise was from nowhere, but was coming from the mind of the first earthling. This event was a one-sided communication, methodically arranged as a sequence of fantasies, by the human mind. The first human here quotes the command of God, signifying that they knew unerringly what the precincts in God’s earth means, but they were equipped to curb those guidelines by replacing it with their self-created dominion. If we go by this line, sin here was not something external to them, but it was operated in a personal and at a rational level. Wittingly, they were that dogged to collide with the mandate of God.

It’s being proved that interrogating the text has its own merit. Thus as a starter! Was it the serpent (external force) or the mind of the human (internal force) that caused the first community to fall? Was it not the dearth of contact with their creator that made the human delude that they were getting answers from the serpent? For the absence of the maker made their mind that distorted! To envision it in a cosmic sense, this serpent is seen tangled around the tree, similar to the one found in Numbers Ch 21:8-9, where God says to Moses, “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live”.

Coming to John Ch 8:44, Jesus says, “You are your father the devil”. Here Jesus is referring to the first earthling who brought the fall and not the serpent that has turned as a sin-taker, from time immemorial. During the whole discussion between God and the first human beings in the garden, the serpent that had no relation with the first earthling, even with the progress that cropped up in the early part of day in the garden, stood as a lamb to be slaughtered, remained silent, just like Jesus who remained silent before the Pilate, chief priest and the Sanhedrin, only to take the punishment upon himself, willingly. For by silently taking the punishment upon itself, the serpent saved the earth community from a gigantic abyss and thereby conferred upon them, life to live.

Relevance

Pre gulf-war period, nearly half of Kerala, which is also sadly now infamously branded as God’s own country, was once, living on an agrarian economy. Regrettably, now we have less than 15 percent of population feeding the other 85 percent. This majority has no commitment to the land or to the farming sector that provides them with rich fruit and food to eat. Over three decades, Kerala has seen the rise in money-spinning
jobs, to huge profits to mega-shopping malls to concrete gardens in contrast to the roads that were lined with green tall thick trees. Hence a decade ago, because of these conditioned trees, fruits such as mangoes, jamun, jackfruit, guava and banana were the forte of this land. But now, the land and soil which yielded fruits in abundance now gaze at the import windows.

Today the quantity and nutritious value of the fruit has also suffered. There was a time when the nutrients used to control the diseases. With the increase of the shelf life it has now become the life taker. But this kernel of truth is missing in a bushel of context. Without any qualm, we now avail fresh fruits from markets, but it is highly masked and soaked with chemicals of high cancerous elements. Dying at thirties was never known in this land, but now the community is tired of cremation, caused by the excessive greed. Disconnection from the soil, now gave them nothing good except diseases of high malignance. It has seen everything at the cost of life. Without losing much time, if Kerala growing up trees on their farmland, it would then be a triple-triumph approach; first it can boost food production, second it can alleviate greenhouse gases and third it can settle the climate change.

To triumph over this situation, one should foster environment consciousness. The immeasurable mono agriculture (single crop) found mainly in the southern part of the state, mechanization and ample use of chemicals at present are causing a deep environmental damage. It can be countered only if we check our greed, raise awareness for the whole planet, elevate our consciousness, open our eyes to the underlying beauty, encourage us to celebrate and honor nature. To strike this balance, certain innovations may be introduced, such as; pollution tax, superior technology, cutting-edge environmental scientist, alternative energy-saving techniques, eco-friendly gadgets and replacement of non-carbon energy. Then and now, the human eye for all time has played with the earth’s resources. In giving the fruit or in planting the saplings, or by saving the extinguishing species, it only increases the re-fertilization and reduces the materialism.

Conclusion
I’m imagining a world where there would be a plethora of Garden of Eden which holds the sun, rain and wind, fights erosion, brings climatic stability and freshwater. I’m imagining a world in which there would be sufficient tree of knowledge which will award us its knowledge, enlightenment, oxygen, food and enhanced life. I’m imagining a world in which there would be ample creatures which can speak wisely and generously against the eco-injustice bullies. Finally, I’m imagining a world in which there would be rich fruits free from globalized chemicals and unhealthy policies. In re-fertilization only rests the hope for a healthier future. For this would be our best bet ever.

Bibliography
God Our Eternal Rock

R. Shibu Mayam

Isaiah 26:1-12

Introduction

Mukkunnimala, a hill located 10 km away from Trivandrum, once a captivating hilly plantation area, capable of controlling the climate in the capital city, is now being levelled down by the profit motivated granite mafia, altering the landscape, destroying water sources, biodiversity and wildlife, affecting more than 2500 people and exposing them to various vulnerabilities. A similar fate is engulfing the Ayiravalli Hills in the city too, making life rather difficult. The resistance movements and protests were of no effect. Similar things are happening in different parts of Kerala creating a wide range of ecological impacts. Granite mining is becoming part of unscientific development to meet the requirements of the rising construction sector. From this it is clear that “anything that alters nature would turn out to be disaster as it happened in the case of the Uttarkhand flood in 2013 August,” says Rufus Daniel, the Vice President, Trivandrum District Panchayat. Mukkunnimala was denuded and thus became the victim of man’s unsustainable development. It is a “classic example of how government machinery twists established norms to serve the interests of the mining mafia,” says Medha Patkar (The Hindu, 3/5/2015 Trivandrum, 3).

Based on this case study I would like to reflect on the concept of God as our eternal rock as seen in Isaiah 26:1-12 with an eco-perspective. This extract forms part of First Isaiah dealing with the sequence of events that occurred during the existence of both the northern as well as the southern kingdoms of Judah and Israel during the latter half of the 8th century BCE with the Assyrians as the arch rivals in front. Here there is a song of joy and praise, and a narration of the futuristic celebration of how the day after the fall of Moab should be. In v.4, the prophet exhorts the people to trust in the Lord for God is the eternal rock.

‘Tsur’ and ‘petra’ are the Hebrew and Greek words used in the OT and NT meaning ‘rock,’ and ‘cliff.’ ‘Eben’ and ‘lithos’ are the Hebrew and the Greek counterparts for ‘stone’. Moses struck the rock to extract water in the wilderness; David used stone/rock to defeat Goliath, the Philistine, the Israelites used to dig wells in the rock known as cisterns to store water (eg. Jacob’s Well in Jn. 4:6) are some of the examples related with rock. From these it can be deduced that rock can be used as symbols of protection, trust, resistance, salvation, redemption, life-provider, etc.

‘Rock’ is a naturally occurring multi granular aggregate of one or more minerals (Earth Systems: Processes and Issues, p-67). It is a proverbial symbol for anything strong, steadfast and inert (The Earth: the Making, Shaping and Working of a Planet, p-58). The metaphorical use of the word necessitates the subjectification of nature instead of its objectification and this negates its intrinsic value and purpose as well. In the animist culture people worshipped nature and all its elements including rock also- that is, they considered nature as an organism, a living being. Modernity and the present day scientific technology have controlled, conquered and penetrated nature. This mechanical approach has led to the destruction of nature, whereas an organic and bio-centric approach can promote its preservation and affirms life. The mechanical approach broke our peace the maintenance of which is the most integral.

1. Peace with Nature (v. 4)

We, the church ‘goers’ feel safe and secure and assume that we are living in perfect harmony with nature, though it is the contrary. The church is like a strong city where only the righteous shall enter in, destroying the unrighteous as Babylon. Hence the prophet encourages us to trust in the Lord who is a strong ‘rock’ (v.4).
Ps. 24:1 says everything belongs to God. Unfortunately we ‘own’ from God. We are not really owners, but custodians. What we call ownership is not actually ownership, we are only paying for the raw materials and labour and thus are not paying to nature. If nature proclaims the ‘glory’ of God, by breaking rock, we are tarnishing God’s glory and distorting the image of the ‘eternal rock.’

God provided rocks for maintaining the ecological equilibrium, which is nowadays lost. Rarely can we see rock in its natural state. The giant construction industries and quarry mafias are reducing the rock to nothing in search of huge profit. It was not like that in traditional societies where rock was highly interconnected with humans. Before the invention of the gun powder and chemicals, people used to build houses by collecting stones, which did not harm nature. Nature also resisted or retaliated in the forms of calamities such as landslides and floods, which are terrible for us. 40 people were washed to death in Amboori, a village in Trivandrum in a major landslide on 9 November 2001.

William Wordsworth in his poem ‘Tintern Abby Lines’ wrote, “... nature never did betray the heart that loved her.” He goes on to sing nature as “the anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul.” Here the voice of nature is being suppressed by human intervention. Profit and maintaining vested interests is the essence of capitalism. Marxists analyze that the whole ecological crisis is the outcome of single minded accumulation of capital. Marx in his early writings highlighted the relevance of the reconciliation of humankind and nature which would bring ‘the humanization of nature and naturalization of humans.’ The tendency to shift our focus from nature to machine heightens the death of nature as well as destroying our peace with it.

2. Peace with People (v.5)
This verse, like the Magnificat, speaks about what is going to happen to those who are humble and trusting in the Lord. Pride is the stumbling stone to failure. God resists the proud, abases them (Job 40:12) and exalts the humble. The feet of the poor shall tread upon the lofty cities (Mal.4:3). God does not say great armies shall tread upon them, but the poor through divine intervention.

There is massive displacement in the name of development. The developmentalists claim that splitting rock is a part of ‘development.’ However the poor people are made environmental refugees. Whether it is in Narmada, Koodamkulam, Chengara, Vilappilsala or in Mukkunnimala, we are repeatedly watching that the poor are being kept down and the proud capitalists are getting exalted. On one side there is endless suffering and on the other side the profit is unending. Here we need to overcome the tendency to ‘spiritualize’ everything; “in the world you suffer, in the next world you would get...”. Here one should keep in mind that people’s problems are to be addressed immediately as Jesus did. Jesus did not procrastinate.

The Christian nations are justifying development and the resultant environmental destruction by misinterpreting the word ‘dominion’ (Gen. 1:28). This would lead to profiteering only. Now the church as a social institution has degraded itself to the level of defending the affluent and neglecting the marginalized. Success or failure is measured in terms of financial gains only! Corruption is rampant. It is not only in terms of money, but also in terms of power, ie, structural. Ours is a God who voluntarily intervenes in situations where there is injustice- Noah’s flood, destruction in Sodom, the destruction of the Pharaoh’s hosts and similar incidents are clear evidences. God will subdue and reform the wicked and show God’s mercy to the humble. The wicked shall not learn righteousness even if we show kindness to them. God lifts up His hands to warn them to repent and make peace with them. God is angry with those who behave otherwise, and delivers the poor who are denied justice.

3. Peace with God (v.12)
The Bible has different synonyms for God in relation to rock such as refuge (Ps. 18:2), strong (Ps. 94:22), fortress (Ps. 31:2), redeemer (Ps. 19:14), perfect work, God of Israel as the rock of Israel and salvation (Ps. 95:1), word of God (Mtt. 7:24), building church (Mtt. 16:18), Jesus as stumbling stone (lithos- Rom. 9:32, 1 Pet. 2:7), living stone (1 Pet. 2:5), corner stone (Is. 28:16, Ps. 118:22), and so on. Paul says ‘... and the rock was Christ’ (1 Cor. 10:4). God is also the God of peace (Jud. 6:24, Is. 9:6, Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 14:33, 2 The. 3:16, Heb. 13:20). To reestablish peace with God also means to maintain peace with nature as it proclaims the glory of God.
Peace is divinely inspired, originates from God, covenantal and comes not in isolation, but through *interconnectedness*. This interdependency makes us to have peace with nature, people and God as well. Human relationship is not a transmitter of peace; instead it brings suffering only. V.13 says, “Other Lords have ruled over them, but what they acknowledge is *God*’s name only”. Human relationships can bring about peace like the Pax Romana, the peace brought by Roman imperialism. It is relative and disappears when a new ruler comes. Today the peace that exists is theoretical. As we say the test of truth is in practice, peace also needs a touch of praxis. Peace devoid of real life situation can never be peace at all. Peace makers are the sons (Mt. 5: 9) and daughters of God. Peace and justice are interconnected (Ps. 85:10). In real life only through interconnectedness can we relive or reanimate or reactivate the peace that we have lost. It is this peace with God that would lead us to find in the Creation, that is, rock, ‘the glory of God’ (Ps. 19: 1).

**Conclusion**

Rock is a part of nature which too proclaims the glory of God. It plays a major role in maintaining the equilibrium of our environment. However it has been destroyed by human greed. It is in this context we need to maintain our peace with, nature, fellow beings and God, all of which are interconnected. Nature is never an item to be commoditized or compartmentalized, it, together with all its living and non-living things, should be taken as a whole so that the harmony of nature can be preserved.

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Then the Lord said, ‘You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?’ Jonah 4: 10-14

Context

Many of the urban localities in my area are the fastest emerging real estate hubs. The dream of owning a house has become the highest priority for the present day generation. The expansion of real estate and infrastructural facility for the construction of highways and factories has led to the deforestation and loss of cultivable land. Lakes and ponds in many towns and cities have disappeared and turned into posh localities to accommodate the wealthy and the powerful. In this process of urbanization and development many creatures have lost its natural habitat. Land, animals, birds, insects, reptiles and fishes have lost its chances of survival. Man the crown of creation (sic) has caused immense destruction to nature. Many are unconcerned about this. The development of human being takes highest priority at the cost of many smaller creatures. The lives of these little creatures are equally important on par with the lives of higher creatures, the humans. Life on this planet is interdependent and human being cannot survive without the creatures around them for survival.

Cosmic Creator cares for the little ones

The prophecies of Jonah and Nahum are evident that Assyrians are cruel and brutal. Their unjust ways and sin brought YHWH’s anger and judgment to destroy Nineveh city. The prophet describes the evil acts of Nineveh towards Israel in the book of Nahum chapter 1. The Lord’s wrath burned against Nineveh in chapter 2. Assyrians had dealt with Israelites mercilessly and the Lord sent his prophets to warn them about the impending judgment and destruction of Nineveh, which is the symbol and epitome of injustice, cruelty and torture. The Lord is a zealous God and the God of justice, who stands for the poor, the marginalized and the weak and takes the side of suffering and vulnerable ones.

The Book of Jonah portrays the Lord’s compassion and concern for the non-Israelites, who are popularly, understood to be the community of non-covenantal nation. Israel depicts herself as a privileged and holy nation as it shares the covenant with the Lord. It has also considered other nations as inferior, worthless and devilish as they do not share covenant with the Lord. Even in the narrative Jonah introduces himself as “I am a Hebrew”. This statement claims the supremacy of a Israel towards other nations. The claims of supremacy and superiority are root causes of all forms of discrimination in this world such as racism and casteism. This superiority claims makes humans a special and a privileged class to exploit and spoil the natural ecological system. The prophet is unable to accept God’s mercy and compassion towards Nineveh. The universal love and sovereign rule of Yahweh is not understood by the Prophet. His superior feelings and claims of a holy and priestly nation and race has become a blot to understand God’s universal mission. Israel’s self-proclaimed highness is challenged in this book and the Lord’s universal love and compassion towards all the nations is expressed as the Lord becomes an advocate to save a non-Israelite nation. At the end of the book there is a surprise and interesting ending that the Lord cares for the many cattle in Nineveh. The great reformer of the Protestant movement Martin Luther relates the story of Jonah with the parable of laborers in the vineyard, Matthew 20:1-16. The first becomes the last and the last becomes the first. The saying has
become very true; animals considered as least from the beginning have become important and first priority for the existence of this earth and humans in it. That the owner shows equal care and concern for those who are late to work and those who are deprived of work opportunities. Both these passages show God's heart towards the needy and oppressed communities. The narrative explains the core of the gospel values that Jesus came to the save the lost ones. God stands for those who are marginalized and vulnerable by the powerful. God's mission is universal and the human comprehension fails to interpret the marvelous acts of God. Every tiny and little creature and person in this world is special and unique to God.

Animals and nature as the agents of God's redemption
For quite some time in the history animals and nature are considered as mere objects and means to meet the needs of human beings. The anthropocentric understanding of the creation has caused severe damage and irreparable loss to nature. Many species of animal and plants are endangered and many are already extinct. For ages human beings have claimed themselves as agents of liberation and God's mission. But it is nature and the creatures which maintain the biodiversity and promote life on earth. Little insects pollinates that becomes a primary element for the reproduction of the plants. It is the so called humans who are the reason for the loss of climatic balance in the world.

The book of Jonah states that animals and nature have become a part of God's redemptive history of the people of Nineveh. Prophet Jonah neglected God's mission and disobeyed the commandments but wind, sea and storm obeyed the Lord Jonah 1:4. The plant, worm, sun, and east wind obeyed the Lord to educate the prophet, Jonah 4: 6-8. Even in the exodus narrative the plagues are the agents of the Creator, Exodus 7-11. Creator God used nature and the most ordinary elements of nature to portray the extra ordinary acts of the Creator to liberate the suffering communities from bondage and oppression.

Animals are considered as irrational beings and their life is reduced to the level of objects to provide human beings comfort and service. But God used animals for didactic purposes. Donkey in the story of Balaam speaks with him and saves his life, Numbers 22: 21-34. The prophet fails to understand the acts of his own donkey but the little animal understands the threat of her master's life and saves him thrice. Generally donkeys are symbolized as slow and lazy, but in the passage it acts and understands the situation instantly and saves the life of her master. The writer of Proverbs exhorts us to learn wisdom from the ants, Prov 6:6.

All the creatures in the universe promote life and are very important for the life on the planet. Human beings depend on all the elements of the nature where as it is very hard to find whether any creature fully depends on humans for their survival. The narrative of Jonah explains that the superior claims of one race, nation and caste are rejected by the Lord. It is also made clear that even the superior and dominant claims of human beings over the creation also does not stand as God also has concern for animals and the creatures. The Creator God is compassionate and always has concern and care towards his creation.

Listening to the cry of nature
Until Prophet Jonah suffered by the east wind he was not able to understand the importance of every creature in the universe. Humans all over the globe have suffered the serious and severe catastrophes yet they fail to repent. Global warming, unseasonal rains, floods, tsunami, hurricanes and cyclones are the results of human abuse of nature. We need to learn from the signs in nature and should act immediately to save our own lives. Saving every little creature in the nature saves our life and our future. Human dominance over the creation should end. Human intervention in the sphere of ecology has only shown disasters many times. It is time for us to learn to co-exist and live in harmony with nature around us. May God bless this words Amen.

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Dishon S

Gift of God

John: 4:6-15

We assume that everything’s becoming more efficient and in an immediate sense that’s true; our lives are better in many ways. But the improvement has been gained through a massively inefficient use of Natural resources” - Paul hawken.

Natural resources are the Gifts of God to be taken care by us. In the creation story, Gen. 1:28, “…God blessed the humankind and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over…” Here we cannot consider the literal meaning of this verse but an in-depth meaning, subjugation/subdue and dominion here means need of humankind's stewardship for the creation. So the Gift of God is to take stewardship of the whole creation. But we being selfish and greedy, misuse the natural resources many a time carelessly. Kunigal is a taluk of Tumkur district. This tiny town has a semi-rural setup, inclining towards urbanization. The distribution of water, is turning out unsafe for domestic purposes. People using this water are often observed to be suffering from throat infections, prolonged cough and also respiratory problems. They pay for safe drinking water (Rs.2 for 20litres of water) which is made generously available. Unfortunately, the municipality has privatized drinking water, in the form of water purifying units rather than taking up necessary actions towards decontamination of polluted water. Municipality exploits people in the name of development/growth. Is this development? Is this justice?

John: 4:6-15, this scripture passage can be read in different perspectives. But we will read this passage as water resource being a ‘Gift of God’. The whole dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman starts near Jacob’s well when he was tired in the course of his journey towards Sychar, a Samaritan city. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “Give me a drink”. Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan was against the Jewish culture (Jews consider the Samaritans impure because of mixed blood through inter-marriage with the Gentiles and they were regarded as constantly menstruating). The woman was shocked when Jesus asked for the drink and questioned him how is it that you being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? This conversation goes deeper, as Jesus answers if you knew the ‘Gift of God’, and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you ‘living water’.

Jesus the Living water

Jesus in this passage identifies himself with two words ‘Gift’ and ‘Giver’. Gift refers to the word which became flesh and living among us. Giver refers to giving of his life for the betterment of the whole creation. And he also points at the life giving resource -water. The Samaritan woman who had no Hope, Joy, and Peace was leading a forlorn life. As Jesus promises her living water, unlike water from Jacob's well, she is filled with new hope and her life utterly transformed. The giver of living water/drink here considers the water more than an earthly, he characterizes it as divine wisdom because the giver himself is a word which became flesh and whoever drinks of this divine wisdom will never be thirst again and they will be satisfied and their life will be renewed for a new venture. Jesus’ promise, opens up new life; his authoritative dialogue makes way for a joyful life. “…The water that I will give will become in her a spring of water gushing/leaping up to eternal life’ John 4:14b. Here Jesus does not say, I am the living water, nor does he identify it with eternal life. But he makes it clear at the end of the passage living water refers to the Holy Spirit which, the glorified Jesus will give to those who believe in him(john 7:38,39). The spiritual meaning of the living water may have been beyond
the grasp of the Samaritan woman, Jesus aim was that the woman will come to believe by recognizing who he is and accepting his offer of life-giving water. When the woman fails to grasp the nature of Jesus’ offer, he starts to focus on her identity, hoping that when she recognizes the giver she will also recognize the nature of the gift.

Jesus our visitor

As Jesus visited the Samaritan woman in Samaria and promises the drinking water, today also Jesus visits us every day at our homes and at the place of labor through scripture passages and promises us also drinking water. We need to identify and recognize the presence of the living water in midst of us. We also need to recognize the silent voices of the water resources in and around us. They groan because of human domination over the resources. As Jesus being a good shepherd in John chapter 10, verse 3 speaks ‘…he being the gatekeeper opens the gate for the sheep and the sheep hears his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out’. As such Jesus calls on us and waits for our response. He calls us by name and we need to be very sensitive to his voice. The voices that we hear by the word, and the responses that we get for our prayers leads us into the green pastures. Through this passage we also need to be in dialogue with Jesus for a just society and for the right of life. As the Samaritan woman we too should not fail to discover the true identity of our giver, and wander for the resource of life. We fail because of our own thoughts about life and values we build without the giver, which misleads us from the law of God. The people of Kunigal are subjugated of their own natural water resource which is polluted by the industrial chemicals and therefore they are sidelined of their rights. The installation of water purifying units is only a means to fool the innocent people who recognize this to be a great service provided by the municipality. People fail to realize the need for purification and conservation of natural water resources available. We need to be aware of misleading powers. This creation is not only for the powerful but it is for the powerless also. The dialogue with Jesus should bear fruit, the local church leaders need to take the responsibility of creating an awareness among people to understand the importance of natural resources and the need for their maintenance. And the church also needs to work at the grass root level to struggle and fight against the injustice of the powerful. Thereby the visit of Jesus at our home and at place of labour will be more fruitful and meaningful.

Bibliography

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

(Matthew 10:29-33)

My pastorate is located in Valparai a small hill town, which is enclosed within an ecologically sensitive tiger reserve forest. My relatives and friends used to visit me during their holidays and we often drive into the forest admiring the wonders of nature. I used to take them through the tea plantations and forest areas to see the wildlife. Usually after a drive for an hour or two, my relatives would sigh, “Hmmm! We are not lucky, we didn’t see any wild life” or “it’s only a deer we spot” and sometimes they would insist driving a little deeper into the forest so that they can spot any larger wildlife. The same happens when it’s a ‘wildlife safari’ or ‘wildlife trip’, because we look for big animals like elephant, leopard, gaur, bear, etc., but wildlife doesn’t mean just the big animals, it includes each and every little creature. Sadly, during that trip we might have missed thousands of beautiful flowers and plants, hundreds of gorgeous birds, insects, reptiles, etc. We’ve never considered the small beings in the forest as wildlife but in reality every living organism in the forest has its own role to play. We must understand the importance of these small creatures in the wild life and as well as in our daily life. Jesus, in his ministry too acknowledged small living creatures and he wants us to do likewise.

Small Beings – Intrinsic value
In Matthew 10:29-33, Jesus talks about the fear of the disciples. In Matthew 10:26-33, Jesus speaks thrice about fear (v. 26, 28, 31), and brings in sparrows twice as comparison. The Greek word 'strouthia' is traditionally translated as sparrow but it also means any small bird, which is used for food by Jews. Sparrows or small birds are food for the poor which can be bought for even two cents. Sparrows are generally considered as food for the poor just as doves are accepted as the offering of the poor. The ‘then people’ saw sparrows as meagre and valueless because it can be bought at a cheap price. But Jesus saw the value of a sparrow and he taught his followers a lesson through it. In verse 31, Jesus said “you are worth more than many sparrows”, according to our understanding it’s the human that has more value but we’ve never considered that the sparrows have a value too, i.e., assume, 1 human = 100 sparrows, then 1 sparrow = 1/100 human. That means each sparrow, either little or more, has value. In verse 29, “…not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father’s care” (NIV). We understand that even the ‘less valued’ sparrows are under God’s care and authority; even to hunt or kill it there must be God’s providence. This shows the greatest care given by God to these small beings.

In Matt 6:26, Jesus says, “Look at the birds of the air” which enlighten us, that Jesus asks us to ‘look at them’ since many a time we ignore the smallest among the creations. In Deut. 22:6, we find God instructing us not to hunt a bird if found with its young ones, that indicates that God’s providence is also with the small beings like sparrows. Jesus agrees and invites us to see the value of those little birds. Predominantly, the Bible is written from an anthropocentric view; giving greater importance to human beings and not to other creations. The other living beings are
regarded as having only an instrumental value for human beings. Human beings were considered the crown of creation and all other beings under their control. But the creation account in Genesis clearly says that God saw ‘good’ in creation (Genesis 1:25) even before creating human beings, which clearly indicates that the anthropocentric Bible ignores the other living beings and stresses importance to human beings alone. Some argue that the ‘experience’ of human beings differentiate them from other creatures, but for small beings like sparrows, the experience of collecting grains, insects, etc is the same as the experience of human beings’ earning their livelihood.

**Small beings – Interconnectedness**

By understanding the intrinsic value of the sparrows we know that we are interconnected and therefore we realize how important it is to care for the sparrows. Sparrows, unlike other birds are closely associated with human beings. It is believed that sparrows have been associated with human beings for thousands of years. These sparrows function like scavengers in homes, eating dispersed seeds, weeds, garbage, and insects like cricket, spiders, bugs, beetles, etc. It also works as a pest controller and cleaner. Secondly, sparrows are regarded as pollution indicators, wherever the sparrow population is sparse, we can be certain that the environment is polluted. This makes it evident that human beings are dependent upon them.

Unfortunately, the sparrow population has greatly decreased in cities and slightly in rural areas. The major reason for the decrease in cities are changes in the urban building design, which results in the shortage of nesting sites, increase of mobile phones emitting electromagnetic radiations, native plants, which are a habitat for sparrows, being replaced by ornamental plants. Increased use of unleaded petrol for vehicles which emits methyl nitrate, a poisonous gas for sparrows, is also a major reason in the decline of the sparrow population in cities. Even in rural areas, the sparrow population is declining, because of the change in agricultural practices, namely monoculture crops and heavy use of pesticides destroying the pests and insects, is the major food for sparrows. Eventually when the sparrow population decreases, insects and pests will increase. Pesticides will be used to control the pests, which ultimately pollute the water bodies and the crop. If this situation continues, sparrows will soon become extinct, our future generation will be shown pictures of sparrows to interpret the above passage, there won’t be scavenging little birds near our homes and our children would miss the sweet chirping sound of sparrows.

**Small beings – Partners in creation**

Partner is someone who would enhance your life for the better. Sparrows should be regarded as partners in creation, as sparrows are our co-creation we must learn to coexist with them. As instruments of God, the creator and redeemer of the little ones, we can protect these small little birds which are an integral part of the eco-cycle in the following manner.

- Protecting insect habitat on farms by avoiding mono-crop cultivation
- Planting native plants in cities
- Increasing green environment in cities
- Keeping nest boxes in urban households
- Reducing the usage of unleaded petrol
- More importantly, consider them as God’s creation and love those small birds

Each little creation in the web of life plays an important role of its own and even if one string is broken, the web of life would be disrupted. To prevent this from happening we in turn need to restore our relationship with the little creatures of God’s creation. “Restoring broken relationships is the real salvation”, and thus restoring the relationship with humans alone is not enough but with every creature. So let us bridge the gaps and mend the broken relationships with every living creature and be part of the God’s salvation. **Amen**

**Bibliography**


Retrace Our Steps

Shuba Keerthana

For lo, the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, reveals his thoughts to mortals, makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name! Amos 4:13

We live in a place where nearly sixty percent of the Indian population depend on Agriculture. But the so called development has severely altered the rural Indian economy, on which socio-economic privileges and deprivations of our country revolve. Changes in its structure adversely impact on the existing patterns of socio equity. Globalization policies have created various challenges for agriculture in India and other developing countries. In recent times, the life giving processes are being converted into exploitative, life denying and life threatening ones. In this context, let us reflect on how far human beings have gone astray from fulfilling God’s purpose and to what extent God’s creation is suffering.

1. Stiffness of the people of God:
Amos was basically a shepherd and a farmer who lived in a place called Tekoa during the 8th century BCE. He was sensitive towards the unjust practices like idolatry, corruption, lavishness which were prevalent in the land of Israel, which seemed to be politically stable and prosperous. A very interesting thing is that Amos did not conform to the standards that
Being God’s spokesman, he courageously challenged the status quo, by openly condemning the people who are in the upper strata of society and he sharply addressed the wealthy women of the ruling class who oppress the poor as ‘Cows of Bashan’. This very name reflects their way of life, their rich and affluent life style, their oppressive attitude, their lavishness, their selfish motives and their insensitivity towards the life of the poor living in their own land. It also reveals God’s anger and God’s displeasure with the people whom God had chosen and made a covenant with. God was displeased with their sacrifices, tithes and thanks offering because their worship and offerings were out of the wealth and richness obtained by exploiting and oppressing the poor and the downtrodden; the elites enjoyed peace and pleasure but the poor were sold into slavery. In Amos 2:6, 7 it says that the poor people’s heads were crushed to the ground and they were sold for a pair of sandals. So their greed and injustice provoked God’s anger. Being chosen was God’s special privilege for them as they were insignificant and few in number, but their pride in their privileged position ruined Israel’s sensitivity to obey God’s commandments and to abide by the mosaic laws which details about caring for the poor and their life of dignity and freedom as mentioned in Deuteronomy 15: 7-11. As they failed to lead a life which God intended, it brought judgment on them. In today’s scenario, the Life Giving Agriculture is commercialised and it is so adverse that it never sustains life, in this globalized context; the livelihood of the common man has been greatly affected. It takes away the food sovereignty of the people of the land and dances according to the greedy wants of the corporate sectors. Poor farmers have lost their indigenous art of farming as they have become so much dependent on modern technologies and agricultural policies in the name of Special Economic Zones- Moreover, the Multi National Companies grab the fertile land, thereby alienating them from their own land thus making the poor farmers landless. Thus the life and survival of the poor agriculturalists and farmers becomes very pathetic. This severe crisis compels them to commit suicide. The total number of farmers’ suicides between 1995 and 2010 is around 2,54,000; in 2012 alone 13,678 farmers’ suicides have been reported, the approximate number of farmers’ suicides would not be less than 50,000 in the last four years period i.e. from 2011 to 2014. So altogether more than 3,00,000 farmers have sacrificed their lives in the last 20 years for the cause of agriculture. On an average, we can say that two farmers commit suicide every hour. Not just human beings alone but nature also had to struggle for its survival.

From the very beginning of the history of creation, the anthropocentric activities have always resulted in affecting the other creations as we know that the disobedience of Adam and Eve brought a curse on the life forms and the land (Gen 3:17-19). Therefore God’s anger extends to all creation even though they were innocent of the sin committed by greedy human beings. Due to the injustice and exploitation of human beings the entire ecological systems have been affected, evidently experiencing the punishment from God, in the form of lack of rain, drought, plague, locusts and scarcity of food. Creation is unable to reveal the glory of the Creator God as human beings rebelliousness has brought about his/her own peril.

2. God’s persistent Call of repentance.

In the exodus event we come across the oppressive Egyptian task masters who crushed the lives of Israelites by exploiting their hard labor and enslaving them. But we know that God persistently worked with God’s creation to liberate the people of God from bondage. In contrast with this, the Israelites turned out to be very harsh and unjust with their own fellow beings who were poor and needy. But God did not spare them but executed the justice impartially even on his own people –‘Only you were Chosen out of all the families of the earth and therefore, I will punish you for all your sins’ (Amos 3:2). The sacrifices and the offerings in the cultic sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal incurred the displeasure of God. Amos sarcastically warn them of their religious practices and idolatry and also reminds the people of the various warnings Yahweh had given them in the recent past such as war and captivity, crop failure, earthquake, drought and famine, the resistance of all creation to reveal its goodness to the unjust people. In this situation God repeatedly calls Israel to turn towards him. But the people paid no heed to him and disobeyed His commandment.

Similarly in our globalized world, we still receive God’s call for repentance. God’s warning through nature demonstrates the inter
dependence we have with the Co-creations. We are so immersed with our destructive and lavish life styles, that we ignore the people who are at the so called lower strata of society-snatching the livelihood of the poor, making the fertile lands barren by using chemical fertilizers and extracting the water source completely, which culminates in mass suicides. Recently, in some of the states in India, certain geographical areas have been declared as drought stricken and barren. The polluted air we breathe, epidemic diseases, farmers' suicides, lack of food, increasing poverty are all the warning signals that we receive during our times. If we harden our hearts like Israel, oblivious of the fact that we are heading towards our own destruction and forget our Creator, we will invariably have to face the consequence of God's judgment.

Therefore it is very essential for us to discern the warning signs of our times to go back to our simple life styles intended by God, which affirms a life to all the inhabitants of this earth in order to make this world a better place for us and our future generations. Those who heed this warning and repent will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit (Amos 9:13-15). These blessings of fullness of life will be inherited only by the people who listen and repent. So may we be inspired by God's word to direct our ways and actions to live together in harmony with all God's creation, establishing God's reign on this Earth.

Bibliography

Lump of Figs: Food As Medicine

Prasad John

Then Isaiah said, “Bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover.” (2 Kings 20:1-7)

I would like to quote from a Malayalam Journal regarding the report on Alleged Irregularities in the conduct of studies using HUMAN PAPILOMA VIRUS (HPV) vaccine by PATH in INDIA: “2644 persons were killed in India between 2005 and 2012, because of the irregular and unscientific medical experiments affected on the common people. About ten thousand people were in serious health problems…”

Most of us are in search of a non-epidemic and a healthy world, and mainly depend upon modern medicines for our well being. But these queries lead us only to some hallucination and then to total disaster. The afore mentioned facts reveal the side effects (both physical, social, and economical) of profit-based and the current commercial healing practises. Owing to the effects of privatisation, commercialization and globalisation, over-medicalization is now becoming an increasing phenomenon and the people are prompted to go in search of the multispecialty hospitals. We can say that the entire health sector has been monopolised by the corporate giants, who along with the media and technology have diverted and reconstructed the vision and taste of the common people, especially in food habits, profession, lifestyle etc., according to commercial interests. Consequently the prevailing healing system is under great threat.
Here the issue is anthropocentric but the cause is geocentric. So how can we say that the greed of human being is a geocentric one? Here we need an “ADWAITHA DARSANA” (non-dualistic vision) in our minds. Generally we deal with the humanity and the nature in two different approaches, without considering the source and the existence of these two. In that sense, the whole problem which endangers our well being is earth related. So we are in need of an alternative. When we think of an alternative, we cannot separate ourselves from the mother earth. By placing ourselves far away from the Earth we are ignoring the intrinsic worth of the Earth components and the interconnectedness of the Earth community. Irrespective of human- non human dichotomy, we have to cling to mother Earth for our survival and well being.

The words of Hippocrates, is relevant here “your food shall be your medicine”. Recently, the concept has been changed. Industrialisation and globalisation have entirely changed our life style, especially our food habits. The irony is that it is the same market which gives us food (instant, tinned and packaged food which causes serious health issues) and makes us avail the medical insurance. So in our lifestyle and eating habits we are completely against our mother Earth which is not only the alienation from the Earth but also the violation of the will of God.

In this scenario, the biblical portion 2 Kings 20.1-7 is relevant for an alternative look at Earth relations and the holistic healing system. The story took place at the time of Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem- that is in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign. The story itself has a sound ecological element. Unlike Isaiah 38.1-8, in 2Ki.20 the Dueteronomists adds v.7 with a clear eco insight. It says “then Isaiah said bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover”. The common fruit of Israel thus becomes an effective medicine to cure the illness of Hezekiah. Fig tree is native to the soil of Israel. For Hebrews, it has many symbolic representations and at the same time it is the chief ingredient of their diet. Most of the biblical back ground studies affirms that the cakes of figs had medicinal qualities and it was used for similar purposes elsewhere in West Asia. Usually we look back to the past with a prejudised mind. But they had their own developed therapeutic methods and equipments (For instance, the ancient Egyptian medical science). Lump of figs symbolizes the need to re-enter in to the interconnectedness of the mother Earth. Apart from the traditional theological undercurrents, lets take a look at 2 Kings 20.1-7 with an Earth centered perspective.

Lump of Figs: The therapeutic intervention of the Mother Earth
Verse 4, says, “Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court the Word of the Lord came to him”. After that the prophet Isaiah proclaims the promise of the Lord to Hezekiah. But unlike Isaiah 38, here Isaiah uses the lump of figs for Hezekiah’s recovery. The application of the lump of figs is very important from an Earth perspective, though it is the Lord’s grace and His remembrance of Davidic covenant, the lump of figs symbolizes the therapeutic intervention of the Mother Earth.

In the story of creation in the book of Genesis, the Lord created the Earth as a living planet, endowing each and everything with a unique character and vision. He made the Earth as a life sustaining sphere and not as a life destroying one.

The lump of figs, the true yield of the soil comes from the womb of the Mother Earth. It is an inevitable fruit for the Palastineans in their diet. The fig is a native of Asia Minor and spread early to the Mediterranean region and it was a plant of extremely ancient cultivation. It is considered as a restorative food which helps quick recovery after prolonged illness. The fruit of the native land nourished by the very climate and the surroundings, is useful for the survival of the same habitat, a treasure of the mother Earth, hidden within her womb. The application of lump of figs thus reveals the healing touch of the Mother Earth.

We are fascinated and tempted by the imported foods and medicines which have totally changed our life and health consciousness and we are living in a world of tastes and tablets, that have the power to wipe us out from the surface of Earth. Thus the healing touch of Mother Earth becomes essential. The lump of figs asserts a therapeutic power of the earth. The soil, water, fruits and everything that comes from the womb of the Mother Earth has this therapeutic element. Here again the figs, the native food becomes the medicine, reverberating the words of Hippocrates “your food shall be your medicine”.

Lump of figs: the prophetic intervention of locality over globality

A visionless society needs prophetic intervention. In Israel a prophet was not a mere foreteller, rather he was a discerning person of their past, present and future. Here the figs have a prophetic colour, because of its role. It reveals the local/native system of survival and existence. At the same time it makes aware of the impacts of the foreign invasions also.

Verse 1 vaguely links the passage with the preceding units—namely the time of Hezekiah and Sennacherib. At that time the Assyrian invasion was a serious problem for Hezekiah (v 6). In colonial terms, the kingdom of Assyria becomes—the colonizers and the kingdom of Judah—the colonized. Here we cannot separate the Hezekiah illness and the Assyrian domination. These two are interlinked. We can easily trace out the interconnectedness of Hezekiah’s healing—Lump of figs—Deliverance of the city (land). The fate of the king and the fate of the city are bound together in which the Lump of figs play a vital role, in revealing the prophetic significance of the figs. The symbolic usage of the fig has some variant connotations. The use of Lump of figs shows the resistance of locality against the globality.

Basically, ecology is concerned with the ‘oikos’, the home. By referring to the term locality, I mean the ‘home’, in other words the ‘Habitat’ (the word local also means home). The symbolic use of Lump of figs highlight the role of habitat in a healing process of its own part. The fruit of the land cures the king and the healing of the king leads to the deliverance of the city (land). In a wider sense, the colonizing powers forced to be reduce themselves by the reorganisation of the Habitat or by the local resistive mechanism.

Here the lump of figs has a prophetic voice. The application of figs is a revolutionistic and a prophetic encounter with the globality, which means foreign engagement upon the kingdom of Judah. Amidst Assyrian invasion, the use of native fruit as a medicine is a reconstruction of the locality and a protest against the globality. It is the food which causes the majority of our illness. We prefer to take food which is not local. The lump of figs thus reminds us of the local surviving system.

Conclusion

A recent survey of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reveals that in national and in Kerala spheres 90 percent of OP and IP patients are seeking modern medicines for their cure. The after effects and the side effect of new healing system is a problematic one.

We cannot survive without the therapeutic touch of the Mother Earth, we cannot sustain without a prophetic intervention of our habitat, because we are undoubtedly bound with the Mother Earth for our formation and for our sustenance. But knowingly or unknowingly we are trying to separate ourselves from her, especially from our habitat. So the lump of figs reminds us of the better living situation which the Mother Earth grants us for our survival. It also reinforces the perfection of God’s creation. Let’s thank the Lord for everything that He has placed here for our wellbeing. Amen.

Bibliography


Towards Ceaseless Rain

R. L. Richardson

“As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause. He does great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number. He gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields.” (Job 5:8-10)

I remember a rhyme “Rain Rain go away, come again another day, little Johnny wants to play,” which we would have sung when we were children without knowing the importance of rain. The rhyme teaches a moral that is not suitable to our Indian context where rain is essential, as people often pray for rain. The lack of rain and change in monsoon upsets the entire ecological system. God has created everything that can contribute to the ecological system. The greater part of the earth’s surface is covered by its enveloping seas, yet in the midst of plenty we are in want of periodical rain for agriculture, consumption, and for the livelihood of human beings and animals. Rain is a wonderful gift to us from God; it is the main source of water, the elixir of life on Earth. According to the Scriptures, rain really is one of the great, inscrutable wonders of God. It is a major component of the water cycle and is responsible for depositing most of the fresh water on the Earth. According to the water cycle, moisture from the oceans evaporates, condenses into clouds, precipitates back to earth, and eventually returns to the ocean via runoff into streams and rivers to begin the cycle again. In today’s context, the government takes initiatives towards rainwater harvesting in order to save water, but how can this process be effective where rain has ceased?

God created the entire universe and the ecosystem in such a way that every human and nonhuman thing created by God should contribute to the ecosystem and should depend on others for its existence. Today, one of the major problems that the world is facing is water scarcity. The failure in periodical rain upsets the ecosystem and leads to drought in many places. “Rain,” such a wonderful gift of God, is gradually decreasing.

Lack of Rain

Each land is unique. There are some lands which remain fertile even without rain and there are lands which suffer without rain. In recent decades, infrequent rainfall has negatively impacted crop production, forestry, water resources, and all living beings in India. Rain failures have even contributed to famine in some parts of India in the past. Even relatively small happenings during the growing season, like unseasonal rain leads to disaster. Unlike a dry spell, prolonged drought will cause regions around the world to slowly dry out. Lands that depend on the seasonal rain are often forced to experience drought if the monsoon fails.

Forests add to local humidity through transpiration and thus add to rainfall. When forests are cut down, less moisture is absorbed into the atmosphere resulting in the formation of fewer rain clouds. Hence there is a decline in rainfall, subjecting the land to drought. Destruction of tropical forests dramatically reduces the amount of rain that falls in the areas near the forests. Researchers predict that if the current rate of deforestation continues, rain could drop gradually and there will be erratic damage in the lives of human and nonhuman beings by 2050. Such losses of freshwater resources are considered one of the most immediate threats to national security in many countries. Because of water crisis there is a tension between the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. The lack of rain has started troubling the lives of Tamilians and peace harmony of Tamilians with people of other states.

Rain in Religions and Cultures

The lack of periodical rain and its effect on the ecosystem has brought rain prominently into religions and cultures. Rain-gods and thunder-gods are more prominent in many mythologies than sun-gods, and they have been propitiated in various ways in different cultures. Newspapers and magazines very often share the message of the prime minister and other
ministers requesting the people to pray for rain. In 2012, the Karnataka Government issued an order to 34,000 temples to perform special pujas and havans to invoke the rain-god Varuna, at a cost of Rs. 17 crores. Their intention to pray for rain reveals its necessity and emphasizes the fact that rain plays a major role in the lives of human beings and nonhumans. In the village context, people, in order to please the rain god, solemnize marriages between humans and animals, and in some villages people go to such an extent of forcing women to walk nude in their village so that God would be pleased and allow rainfall immediately. If God is pleased therein pours rain on earth is a strong belief in all cultures and religions. Even rain dances practiced in some cultures make it clear that lack of rain is not taken lightly by any religion or culture. Moreover, some cultures consider rain as a sacred gift from the rain god; when skies are clear and the ground is dry, some folks look up to the heavens and request divine intervention, in the form of prayers for rain.

Rain in Scriptures
The first rain in the Scripture is recorded during the life of Noah, when God gave rain for forty days and forty nights, and He judged the whole earth and His creation with flood. A question that immediately arises in our minds is: Did it rain before the flood? According to the creation account in Genesis 2:5, God created everything for the benefit of the earth, but “Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth,” because instead of rain a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole face of the ground. And it was after the flood that God made an everlasting covenant saying “I am putting my bow [rainbow] in the clouds” (Genesis 9:13). And this sign of rainbow is not mentioned before the flood and hence the rain during the time of Noah is the first rain on earth. The first rain turned into a curse for many, but Noah and his family were saved. Rain is a curse when there is too much of it! On the other hand, rain is a blessing from God to the earth and humankind. God says that “I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase” (Leviticus 26:5). Rain at the right season is really a blessing to us.

Lack of Rain in 1 Kings 17:1-7
As there was sudden rain in an unexpected season, Prophet Elijah abruptly breaks in upon the scene. There is no previous announcement of his coming; but here he stands as God’s own man ordained to bear witness in evil times. Elijah is supposed to be called the Tishbite because he is from a place called Tisbeh, east of Jordan, and was an inhabitant of Gilead. This implies that he was not an Israelite, but an Ishmaelite. The employment of a Gentile to the prophetic office might be to rebuke and shame the apostate people of Israel and the apostate King Ahab.

King Ahab was the seventh king of Israel since Jeroboam. He is the son and successor of an evil king Omri and the husband of Jezebel. He became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned for twenty-two years. Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre, influenced Ahab and strove to spread idol worship of Baal in Israel. Ahab built a pagan temple, and allowed idols into Israel. According to the Scriptures, Prophet Elijah encounters King Ahab twice: the first encounter is mentioned in 1 Kings 17 and the second in 1 Kings 21. According to King Ahab, Elijah was a “trouble maker of Israel” (1 Kings 18:17). The Prophecy of Elijah had troubled the king, the people, the nation, and particularly the ecological system pertaining to that context.

I. No Rain – No Reign
Elijah the prophet was instrumental in God’s plan and prophecies to Ahab, the king of Israel, that “As the L ORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kings 17:1). And the rain ceased for three and half years. Here, Elijah strongly predicts that Israel will experience no rain and that it will result in drought. Why did God allow Elijah to pray that the rain cease in Israel? Archaeological evidences suggest that Baal was considered to be the Canaanite god of storm, thunder and lightning. Baal was also considered as the god of fertility. It was the belief of Canaanite people that Baal was the one who supposedly brought rain to the earth. Moreover, the people of Israel were into idol worship and were oblivious to the commandments of God given through Moses. Ahab the king instead of bringing people to God (YAWEH) introduced Baal into the land of Israel, which made people forget all that God had done for them, and they began to worship pagan gods. The king chosen by God must have led his people to the God who saved them from slavery in Egypt and brought them into a land of milk and honey. Moreover, the king should care for all the inhabitants of his land, and must see to that people are provided enough resources to
live in his land. Whereas the enforcement of Baal worship in Israel by King Ahab had shaken his reign after the prophecy and prayer of Elijah. The land experienced drought without rain for three and half years. According to the Jewish belief, drought was the threatened punishment of national idolatry (Deuteronomy 11:16-17, 28:23). Through the prophecy and prayer of Elijah the prophet, God warned Ahab that the country would suffer from drought if the cult of Baal was not wiped out from the land of Israel.

II. No Rain – No Grain

After prophesizing that “there will be no dew or rain during the next few years,” Elijah was asked to go to east and hide by Kerith Brook (stream). He was drinking from the stream and ate what ravens brought to him. According to 1 Kings 17:7, the stream dried up, and Elijah moved to Zarephath as advised by God. But why did God ask him to move from the place where he was? The reason is Elijah could not be fed at that place.

Ravens fed him with bread and meat. And during the drought the bread and the meat were not available, which means that without rain there will be no grains to make bread and all the nonhuman creations such as animals and bird were dying without water. Hence the ravens which fed Elijah could not bring meat and bread and moreover, the stream dried up and there was no water to drink. This should have been the situation in the whole of Israel. According to 1 Kings 18: 5, Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals.” This was the exact situation of Israel during the period of drought. The king was forced to find grass to save at least some of his horses and mules. Then what would have happened to the entire ecosystem because of the dangerous drought?

III. No Rain – No Gain

According to James 5:17, because of the prophecy and prayer of Elijah there was no rain for three and half years. The land economy would have plummeted, and as Elijah moved to another land, the people of Israel would have moved to the neighbouring land for survival. That fruitful land of honey and milk turned into barrenness. According to 1 Kings 18:2, after the prophecy and prayer of Elijah, rain was stopped by God for three year and by this time “the famine had become very severe in Samaria.” Elijah reproved Ahab for his idolatry and other wickedness, and told him that unless he repented and reformed, this judgment would be brought upon his land. The king in the clutches of his wife Jezebel was hesitant to respond to the prophecy of Elijah, which turned the key of the clouds and the heavens became brass. The land was made to dry without water, and such an absolute drought would have converted the whole country into an uninhabitable waste.

The chosen text has proven that the lack of rain has troubled the kingdom and its ecosystem and the land was converted into a waste land. The prophet demonstrates that the dew and rain-clouds are not of Baal’s giving, but are wholly in the hands of God, who can bestow or withhold their blessings according to His will. It was the king and his people that diverted from the fold of God, but because of such evil acts of an evil king and his people the land which was given as a gift to His people was made barren without rain. The message of Elijah to King Ahab was “Beware that your hearts are not deceived and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you” (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). Elijah reminded King Ahab, that the king has the power to reform the land.

Rain and Nature Are Controlled by God – Psalms 104

Jehovah has absolute control over all the elements of nature including rain. Psalm 104 is a poetic summary of God’s creation of the world as found in the first chapter of Genesis. All those created by God are mentioned by the psalmist as a reason to praise and glorify God. Verses 13, 14 say that God will send rain on the mountains from His heavenly home and will fill earth with the fruits of man’s labour. He makes the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for the use of people. It is clear to us that nature is controlled by Jehovah and He sends rain to the earth and He should be praised for rain. God has made rain as gift to the entire ecosystem, not only to humans.
No Rain—In Today’s Indian Context
In the context of Elijah, rain was ceased because the nation was involved in idolatry.

The chosen people were moving away from God’s fold and hence God stopped rain. Whereas in our living context, human beings are in large working against creation and the ecosystem, both of which have been given unto us by God. According to Albert Schweitzer “Man (human) has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth.” The selfish desire of human beings in subduing and dominating the creation and ecosystem is the main reason for the collapse in the ecosystem, which gradually reduces rainfall.

Due to the lack of monsoons, crops fail, and if once crops fail, famine can become a major problem in our land. A report briefs that India would need to double its water generation capacity by the year 2030 to meet the demands of its surging population. Economists argue that India’s economy is closely tied to its fickle summer rains, whereas India is experiencing worst monsoon in recent years.

Researchers have discovered that “destruction of tropical forests dramatically reduces the amount of rain that falls.” There is serious concern that widespread deforestation could lead to a significant decline in rainfall. Eventually, the effect could extend outside the region, affecting important agricultural zones and other watersheds.

Such losses of freshwater resources are considered as one of the most immediate threats to national security in many countries and will have a tremendous effect on the social, economic, and political climate of a country. Realizing the importance of water, politicians of the future may try to secure their existing freshwater supplies or wage wars to acquire other sources of water.

Artificial Rain—“Cloud Seeding”
Some developed countries such as the United State of America, Russia, and China, in order to avoid water scarcity create artificial rains through “cloud-seeding,” a method in which chemicals are dispersed into clouds using aircrafts or rockets, accelerating the creation of ice crystals that eventually become rain. These countries have invested in this method for combating the land’s increasingly severe droughts and, supposedly, preventing hail. In 2011, China spent $150 million on a single regional artificial rain program. The USA, by comparison, spends around $15 million a year. It now creates 50 to 55 billion tons of artificial rain a year. As water grows scarcer and air pollution more severe, China plans to seed even more clouds. With its horrendous air pollution and acute water shortage, China is a natural contender to be the world’s leading “cloud-seeder.”

Fewer Solutions
• Our governments have to invest in new forestation programs, reforestation, and sustainable management of the remaining forests.
• Reducing the usage of paper, because paper is made from wood pulp. Deforestation is done in order to accumulate more wood pulp to manufacture paper.
• Reducing the usage of wood and using alternate materials in construction of houses, hotels, schools, colleges, etc.

Conclusion
When rainfall in a region decreases, crops won’t grow, animals that are fed by the crops will suffer, and the economy of a region or an entire country will suffer as well. The lack of periodical rain in Tamil Nadu has turned to be a disaster in the lives of poor farmers. Many have lost their lives due to drought in their lands. The unseasonal rain has damaged the economy of Tamil Nadu in recent years. All activities of human beings against creation have led to such drastic change in the ecosystem, particularly the water cycle, which troubles the creation of God. Countries like China involve in cloud-seeding, which is against God’s creation. This technique “cloud-seeding” does work, but could cause other problems. Researchers and scientists place their argument that “prematurely inducing rain prevents it from falling elsewhere and makes hail expand.”

Creation is God’s gift to us. Our contribution to the ecosystem and God’s creation is gradually lost and this is the main reason for this dangerous collapse in the ecosystem. God created everything in such a way that every living and nonliving creation on earth should depend on each other for its existence. This formula of God is overruled by the selfishness of human
beings, which troubles not only human beings but the entire creation. Let us come back to God and His creation, let us live an interdependent life with the rest of the creations. Let us commit our life to God because creation is God’s gift, and every activity in the creation and ecosystem is controlled by God. As the psalmist says, “God will send rain at right times.” So let us join our hands together in favour of the creation and ecosystem. May God bless us all.

“I will give you your rains in their season and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.” Leviticus 26:4

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**Lord’s Prayer**

_D. Jeyasingh_

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. (Matt.6:9-13)

**Contextual Issues**

We are all aware that the earth consists of various living creatures and natural elements. The soil and water sustains them. Of all these elements water is the most important source of life and covers almost 3/4th of the face of Earth in the form of rivers, sea, etc…

**Local Issue**

River Kovoon in Chennai is the best illustration of the human exploitation of natural elements, especially in this context water. The water here instead of sustaining life has unfortunately turned out to be a destructive agent, because of irresponsible action of human beings. The city drainage, industrial waste, dyes etc. flow into this river thus polluting it. Very recently, in May 2015, Indian Parliamentary budget session has allotted 20,000 crore rupees to clean up a single river called Ganges (which is a Holy river, according to religious myths). So just imagine how much has to be spent to clean up all rivers streets, lands etc.
Global Issue
A recent survey gives us the details of the amount spent cleaning up the region around the nuclear reactor which was blasted at Fukushima, Japan on March 2011 that comes around 5,000 billion dollars. Then how much are we ready to pay to clean up the whole Pacific Ocean?

From Context to Text
The best teacher who ever lived, Jesus Christ delivered an effective Sermon on the Mount, preached about the “Kingdom of God”, taught us to pray the perfect prayer for all times. i.e. The Lord’s Prayer. This prayer has been passed over to us from the ancient Jewish prayer known as Qaddish and shaped by Matthean community along with the familiar lines of synagogue prayer. And also in the secular sphere, it is found to be the opening prayer of the Australian Parliament. Unfortunately this prayer opens with an invocation and not sealed within the word Amen but plays a vital role in forming our Christian theology and shaping our faith in our spiritual journey. According to Matthew the structure of the prayer can be broadly divided into 2 sections with 3 petitions each. The first section is focused on different ways of asking God to bring down the God’s Kingdom on this Earth. The second section deals with the day to day trials on this earth which prevent us from experiencing the Kingdom of God. In this sermon I would like to pick up only the first section of the Lord’s Prayer.

Though this prayer brings in the dualism between Earth and Heaven, the very opening word “Our Father” becomes the connecting term between these two spheres thus tearing the veil between the Earth and the Heaven. Hence, by calling the immortal, divine God as ‘Our Father’ we the mortal and temporal beings are becoming partners, related to the whole creation. Moreover the word “our” does not only representing the human but also the whole creation as it is recorded in Romans 8:22.

“Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven:”

Here in these two lines the Hebrew style of “Parallelism” is employed. William Barclay says that the parallelism is “A Thing is said in one way and then in another way which repeats or amplifies or explains the first way.” Kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus’ message in his ministry.

The Kingdom of God is nothing but a society/ government/ community on earth where God’s Will is perfectly done as it is done in Heaven.

God and Earth
Repeatedly the Bible speaks about Earth as the place where God’s Will and Kingdom can be experienced. God proclaims in Ex. 19:5 “Indeed, the whole earth is mine” and also in Ps. 24:1, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” The very first verse in the Bible describes how this earth was, and then how God has transformed Earth according to God’s will. And then God filled the earth with every living being called the eco-life-sphere and at last symbolically God created (Gen. 2:7) human beings from the dust of the ground (adama) to show that the human being were interconnected to the whole spheres of life (creation) and found it was good. Hence Chief Seattle’s saying comes true, “Earth does not belong to us, but we belong to Earth”. Hence Earth brings forth “life”. When we honor earth, we honor life. We know from science that the only planet in this solar family where life exists through H2O (water) is Earth. Also, God’s plan or purpose is to bring forth life in its fullness on earth. That is why from the time of creation God had a specific purpose on earth until the eternal Kingdom (Rev. 21:1-22:5) could be realized in its fullness upon this earth. Also, by demonstrating that the human being came from the dust and return to the same dust, God depicts clearly the interconnectedness and dependency of human beings on nature and the environment.

Earth and Human
God established His Kingdom and Will in creation but human beings lost its order and value. Again through Jesus Christ it has been inaugurated on this earth but due to our limitations and trials (which is dealt with the second section of The Lord’s Prayer) we are not able to experience it in its fullness. Then the eternal hope of the new Kingdom which is yet to come will pave a way to experience the life in its fullness on this same earth. As Thomas Merton says, “every moment and every event of every human beings life on this earth, plant something in their soul.” So, the little flowers which are expressing the joy of the earth are to do with our soul, also it will have some effect on our spirituality. That is the reason why even Jesus Christ referred to these little flowers in his sermons on
the mount. Hence all things found on the face of earth like morning dew, grass, lily, flowers, dust, worms, grass hopper, butterfly, and importantly rivers least valued by humankind have its own specific plan and purpose in God’s sight and definitely to do with our spirituality.

Now in this human proposed modern world in the name of development by using fertilizers all these minute organisms or any life for that matter has become a commodity and has been exploited or killed forgetting the lines of Barry Commoner. “The proper use of science is not to conquer nature but to live in it” In this changing scenario by the effects of human misdeeds on the earth we are not able to see the joy through the flowers but only its cry through the active volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis and etc…

**Earth and Eternal Kingdom**

God in Gen.2 made five rivers in the Garden of Eden and found it was good. Just imagine how good it would be to see the whole earth praise God through these God given rivers, flowers and creatures. The people, especially Christians exploited natural resources for selfish ends. Also we need to realize the reality that modern science and technology we cannot help us to download rice or wheat from a computer, grains need natural elements for growth.

Realizing the great dangers and disasters which may happen in the future due to our irresponsible ways of greed and exploitation on the face of this earth, we have to say this perfect Prayer (Lord’s Prayer) in a more meaningful way than in its ritualistic rhythm.

**Conclusion**

As rightly pointed out by Mahatma Gandhi, “The mother earth provides more than enough to satisfy every one’s need but not for every one’s greed”. At this juncture, its high time for the need of balancing the order of the eco - sphere of our mother Earth, and draw a line between our need and greed. By drilling the earth miles down for water to fulfil the greed of multinational soft drinks companies, by mixing all kinds of industrial dyes, chemical wastes, nuclear wastes into all water bodies (sea, river, cannel, ponds) we shatter the will of God and destroy the living Earth. Let us stop and turn in a new direction of life safeguarding the water bodies and establish God’s Kingdom on this earth according to God’s perfect will. Since God created this planet Earth with a great purpose to establish God’s Will/ Kingdom, we are all called to be the best guardians/ co-workers/partners/mutual custodians of this earth. Let us therefore reduce, reuse, recycle, restore & replenish the richness of the blessings of this Earth only for our need not for our greed. As responsible ‘Children of God’ and ‘Parents of the Next Generation’ let us learn the importance of life and Earth through water and value every minute organism and every creature found on this earth. So that the eternal hope about the kingdom of God on Earth can be realized.

May God use each one of us as a “Channel of God’s Kingdom / Will” on this Earth. Amen.

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Introduction

Idukki, one of the most naturally endowed districts of Kerala, with its high ranges and wooded valleys depicts the art of God our creator. Greenery and beauty of the tea estates, the coolness of cardamom estates and scenic attraction of the coffee plants are the precious gifts of God's creation. The people around these estates are the beneficiaries of life and livelihood as God had intended for his people. Unfortunately, these naturally endowed gardens and nature are exploited by profit loving landlords.

For a high yield of cardamom and coffee plants, planters use chemicals, pesticides and insecticides which are harmful to human beings. This causes pollution in food, water, air and in the long run the workers are affected by diseases caused by the poisonous chemicals. This unsanctified manner of using pesticides, fertilizers, insecticides, and chemicals creates new diseases and an unhealthy community in and around these estates. People here suffer from chronic diseases like cancer, asthma, lungs diseases, genetic disorders and other incurable diseases. Human beings, animals, nature and small species are groaning to escape or recover from the disastrous state of the creation. There are many Tribals and Dalit people who are affected and infected because of the changes in climate and nature. However, these people who are losing their identity, culture, are alienated from society as well.

In the passage mentioned above Paul describes the struggle between the forces of grace and sin by means of a sustained contrast and comparison between Christ and Adam. In a mythological way, Paul portrays Adam's falling prey to sin as coming under the power of a ruthless tyrant or despot, and passing on that slavery and the destiny of death that it entailed to all his descendants. In this context we need to read and interpret the passage that we have taken for meditation. This passage compares the life of the first man, Adam and the new Adam. Paul was writing about the first man's sin and consequent death. Men and women receive life from the first man, through their ancestor and therefore all who belong to the community, both dead and living, are inter-related. One person's action can affect the whole community where the new Adam gives the hope and life for the creations through his redemptive life.

1. Sin and Death of Creation through Old Adam (Creation in the realistic world)

Adam's rebellion brought general disorder into this world, which God had created. Death entered into the world as a result of the first man's rebellion and sin. Adam represents the real unity of mankind. All Adam's descendants share the guilt of Adam's rebellion. Further, Paul says that all men sinned, when Adam did and death spread to all because all have sinned (Rom. 5.12). We are all under the power of sin, inherited from Adam (Rom. 3.9). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3.23).

Old Adam represents the sinful nature of the people and the nature of sinfulness is selfishness and destruction particularly destruction of the powerless and the weaker sections of the society, women, children and more specifically nature. It is not the use of pesticides and insecticides but the exploitation of the natural resources like water, air, soil, and life structure of the species that directly affects human health and their very existence.
Through sin in the form of beauty, lust, greed, taste, self, pride, knowledge, profit and accumulation, death came into the world. These are precisely the factors that control the powerful landlords and estate owners to do injustice to the poor and marginalized people around them.

Mining of the land and rock has become a very serious threat to creation. Quarries are generally run by people who are supported by the political parties and the rich landlords, who make profit by damaging the earth and thereby threatening life. Mineral water plants are another challenge to the people around these estates. Deforestation disrupts the nature and constructions and western models of developments have become a serious issue. Soil erosion is yet another major concern. Disappearance of water streams is a common phenomena in this area and the mining of the river sand has adversely affected river structure and consequently the flora and fauna.

Hence, Paul says that the sin of old Adam has brought lust, attraction for beauty, greed for accumulation, negation of life, and death of all creation. Consequently creation is groaning as the balance of nature has been disrupted by human beings acting with vested interests in their relation to God, to one another and to the non-human material world.

2. Paradigm shift from old Adam to new Adam (Changes of creation in a new scenario).

This passage clearly focuses on the understanding and paradigm shift of old Adam to the new Adam, which may create a conflict between creation and its existence. Old Adam was the controller of the creation and a steward. The new Adam will be the protector of the creation and a sustainer of life. If Adam is a vehicle and instrument of sin, Christ is the vehicle and instrument of grace. If Adam ‘models’ human beings wrongly relating to the creator, to each other and to the world, Christ, as the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45), models humanity empowered by the grace to relate and act constructively in all directions. New Adam as Christ brings grace to the whole creation and the justification for the human and nature to establish the justice in the unjust world. New Adam is the ambassador for the righteousness. However, new hope is established through the involvement of the great Adam. The Sin of the first Adam put the entire creation to blame and guilt, but the sacrificial blood of Christ cleansed that sin and brought redemption through the cross and resurrection.

3. Eschatological Hope of Creation comes through New Adam (Eschatological hope of creation)

The essential point arising out of his depiction of Adam in Romans 5 is a sense of the solidarity of the human race. There is an interconnectedness binding all together for the good of all. In the Christian view every human being needs to be redeemed. All eschatological assertions refer to the present as well as to the future, in two ways. First, they are based on present knowledge and experience. Secondly, the last things which these assertions point to are present realities. We know of judgment, resurrection and eternal life fragmentarily in the present, because we participate in Christ who is the end or goal of history. More specifically in eschatological assertions we see all things in the light of Christ, who is the end of all things, the last Adam (Rev. 1:17, 1 Cor. 15:45). Eschatological hope overcomes the ambiguities of the conflicts between good and evil in history and the love of God manifest in Christ will be victorious over sin and the power of evil in this world. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation (2 Cor. 5.17).

All creation is waiting for the newness of the coming realities. Hope for the new creation will bring the new order of life. The story of grace says that Jesus was the one in whom God’s reign first became fully realized. Therefore, the return of Christ in power and glory means the fulfillment of the reign of God.

Where grace and justice of God prevails there we are able to see the realized eschatological truths, which means that the kingdom of God will be established and experienced in the real life of creation. God manifests himself to the people as Dalits, Tribals, women, Children and weaker sections of the society thus identifying, accompanying, and sustaining their life for the goodness of the creation. The cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings hope for the world in which there will be justice and peace. Eschatological hope will eradicate the sinfulness of exploitation and accumulation where we experience the fullness of the community of creation. The poor and marginalized community of the estate workers and weaker sections of the society are losing their rights of the creation which are plundered by the powerful in society. However, through the
new Adam there is hope that the valuable life of the segregated will be honored and cherished.

**Conclusion**
The challenges and understanding of nature is essential to have a balanced approach to the theological formation and implementation of social life. Theo-centric, anthropocentric, and nature-centric are to be co-equal with the existence of the world for a better life. ‘Adam’ is the primary object of God’s labor and the word used for the cultivation is ‘abad’ which means to serve which underscores that human dependence on earth is not for domination over the creation. Therefore, the dream of the farming community will be as ecological, social and interdependent one, which will compel human beings to become responsible members of the ecosystem. In this understanding the god of agriculture, social relations, god of earth will be the new Adam that we seek. The image of God is reflected through us in our interrelatedness. The life and story of Jesus sets an example for us to follow.

Every life is precious as it has intrinsic worth and value and interconnectedness in its own existence. Life in itself has the voice as its language and response. Every movement of nature highlights the purpose and resistance for survival. However, the ultimate custodian will be the creator, sustainer and giver of life, who will make the entire creation an eschatological world based on the co-existence and sustenance for a good life.

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**Living in Harmony**

*S. Devasahayam*

He also said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.’ He also said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.’ Mark 4:26-34

**Introduction**

Man is invariably in the quest for pleasure, materialistic goals and abundance in this modern world and has exploited nature to the maximum that nature has been rendered almost incapable of replenishing itself. We have neglected the amazing relationship between human beings and nature, and the natural resources like air, water and soil have been polluted intensively with disastrous consequences. We are now in search of solutions to stop or reduce the global pollution as our own life is threatened by the pollution. It is high time for us to find an appropriate environmental ethics to prevent further aggravation of the present pollution crisis and act with a sense of responsibility to nature and fellow
beings. Man must necessarily learn to live in harmony with the rest of creation.

The Mystery of the Kingdom of God
Mark 4:26-34 presents the mystery of the Kingdom of GOD through the enigma of parables. Clearly, the parables, similitude, and extended metaphor or example story that Jesus employed to present the Kingdom of GOD are an integral part of his teachings.

Mankind has to depend on nature for his food, medicine, shelter, clothing and other basic necessities to survive. To benefit from nature we have to understand nature so that we can use the natural resources, live harmoniously with nature and with our fellow human beings. By understanding the working of nature (seasonal rainfall patterns, methods of conserving water, various soil types and the conditions that are required for growth of various food crops, etc.) we can obtain better results from our agricultural efforts and balanced methods. The mystery of the Kingdom of God is that Mankind has to depend on nature and nature has to depend on Mankind which is the mysterious and unique aspect of God's creation of the universe.

Living in Harmony
It's time to wake up and to support the harmonious relation between mankind and nature and between human beings. The passage also highlights another dimension- the unfolding of life in creation is a source of wonder in itself and the wonder of life in harmonious living. However, embedded within it is a further purpose – to live for the good of others. And so the fields bring forth grain which can be harvested and then prepared as food. The tree brings forth fruit which, again, can be eaten. The tiny mustard seed grows into a great shrub with large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. Creation knows that it must live in harmony. It lives not only for itself, but also to care for, and nurture life in others.

Over the past centuries, as human beings became fascinated with their mechanical/technical proficiency, and power to manipulate creation for their own needs, the natural powers of creation to flourish and to live in harmony, have been very seriously damaged. Creation has continued to make every effort to pursue its divine patterns and purpose, but is now severely restrained due to human interventions and disrespect.

The Gospel of Luke calls us to live in harmony with nature and with our fellow human beings, but we are blinded and distracted by our self, our preoccupations and priorities. As a result, instead of following creation's wisdom to bring forth life and the nurturing of helpful relationships, we have, in many ways, created a culture of death, of fear and suspicion, of domination, of alienation and disrespect. Isaiah 11:6-9 emphasizes it humorously that “the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them”.

Re-connect with Creation
How can we re-connect with a “holy” relationship with Creation, with the environment, where we live-in balance, reverence and gratitude? Friends, the wisdom of our Scriptures calls us to be active in bringing change in our own lives, and in the life of our parish community and environment. And this mirrors an infinitely creative, loving and intelligent Source/Creator. Creation has so much to teach us!

Grass-roots movements around the globe are calling for new ways of living in harmony. At the same time the parable of the mustard seed reminds us to live in holy relationship with God which will bring about a transformation for the Common Good. We know how world leaders have been resisting such far-reaching changes, being so attached to fear and their own visions of self-interest. While our individual efforts to love creation makes a difference, it is only change of structures and laws at the national and global levels, which will truly save our planet. If a man wants to maintain a relationship with God he must necessarily have a relationship with nature, if truly one who has relationship with nature and mankind it naturally follows that he will have a holy relationship with God.

Conclusion
The U.N. theme chosen for World Environment Day 2015 is “sustainable lifestyles”. Our consumer habits must come under scrutiny raising certain questions. How much do we buy, and do we truly need what we buy? How do we travel? From where do our clothing and other goods come, and how does this impact the most vulnerable of workers? How much
do we throw away and how? How do our consumer habits contribute to carbon emissions? The UN Environment Programme says, “By 2050, if current consumption and production patterns remain the same, and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our way of life. Living well within planetary boundaries is the most promising strategy for ensuring a healthy future”.

In today’s world, Man is now in the quest of solutions to stop or reduce the global pollution issue as his own life is endangered by the pollution. If mankind is able to act with a sense of responsibility to the natural world, to his fellow human beings and to the unborn future generations, we have to find an appropriate environmental ethic today to prevent further aggravation of the present pollution crisis.

Bibliography

Wake Up
E.B.S.Nadh

“Tell your children of it,
And let your children tell their children,
What the cutting locust left,
The swarming locust has eaten.
What the swarming locust left,
The hopping locust has eaten,
And what the hopping locust left,
The destroying locust has eaten.
Wake up, you drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you wine-drinkers,
Over the sweet wine,
For it is cut off from your mouth,” Joel 1:3-5

KOLLERU (fresh water lake)
One of the largest fresh water lakes of our country Kollaru Lake is located between Krishna and Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh where I live. It spans over two districts - Krishna and West Godavari. The lake serves as a natural flood-balancing reservoir for these two rivers. It’s a shallow fresh water lake that expands up to 954 Sq. Km at the highest flood level in Krishna Godavari Basin, more than 185 bird species have been identified in this area. Migratory birds from Australia,
Siberia, Egypt and Philippines assemble near this Kolleru Lake in search of habitat. The lake supports a rich biodiversity and high biomass of fish, plankton that forms the source of food for birds. Pelicans arrive here during the nesting season to raise their young. Crustaceans and Mollusks and 63 species of fish belonging to 29 families are found in this Kolleru Lake. The lake is fed directly by water from the seasonal Budameru and Tammileru streams, and is connected to the Krishna and Godavari systems by over 68 in-flowing drains and channels. This had great impact in terms of pollution, leading to difficulty in getting drinking water for the local people. This is in addition to the loss of ecological diversity and intrusion of sea water into the land masses and its fallout in terms of adverse influence on the rainfall pattern in this region.

Kolleru Lake is suffering from the exploitation of people and selfish interests of mankind who exploit the lake. Thousands of fish tanks were dug up effectively converting the lake into a mere drain, the rest was occupied by the big and small politicians and local fishermen and used for aquaponics. Ingilayh and Bommidaya are two species of Pisces, which are under threat of extinction. Flora and Fauna are in danger. A fresh water wetland habitat with Ipomea, Eichornia, Reeds, Tall grasses are the shelter for thousands of small birds. Because of the pollution the Flora and Fauna are fast disappearing.

Misunderstood Word

The Garden of Eden witnessed the first human disobedience to God, which was continued and is being continued. The power that God has blessed us (human) with, was misunderstood. When God finished His creation, He blessed them (Human-Male & Female) and said, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” Gen 1:28

The word “dominion” in this text was interpreted by Westermann as “wise stewardship”, Norman C. Habel interprets “dominion” as “harsh control” and states there is nothing gentle about the word “kabash”-subdue and the Hebrew word used for earth,”” ets” is feminine in Gen1:28. So, many eco feminists argue that the way that we take control over the earth is akin to male domination, not just in this case but in all areas. In cities water ponds are converted into real-estates, mangroves in the sea shore are destroyed for the sake of resorts. The majority of the world understood the word “dominion” as Norman C. Habel explained and took control over the nature and the earth and used them for their greed.

Psalm 8:4-5 reflects the same message. When the word of god is understood favorably no one can stop the people who have taken “harsh control” over the Earth and the resources. Our greed has played a major role in the degradation of the environment. The entire creation obeyed God’s word except human beings. In Luke 8:22-25 Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waves and they instantly ceased. Ravens obeyed God’s word and fed Elijah 1kings 17:6. Fish obeyed God and swallowed Jonah, Jonah 1:17, Fig tree responded to the word of God, Mark11:12-25. So perhaps only the disobedient human beings are the cause for the degradation of climate.

Call to Acknowledge

The book of Joel describes a prophetic response to an ancient as well as modern environmental crisis. In Joel 1:3,4 God was speaking to the elders of Judea to tell their children about the successive empires which assailed Judea and also literally the suffering that they had through the natural calamities and locusts. Joel describes an ancient ecological crisis, and examines this crisis theologically. Marlow says that Natural disasters are used as a warning from God to his people to signal God’s displeasure, while fertility and abundance are signs of God’s renewed favor. In her view disobedience breaks down the God-human relationship and consequently also breaks down the Humanity-creation relationship. Harmonious relations between God and Humanity are reflected by restoration of the links between Human and non-human creation. Laurie J. Braaten analyses Earth Community in Hosea, where both humans and the Earth are punished for turning away from God. When humans use the land to grow offerings for false gods, the Earth is implicated in this sin. After punishment, repentance and restoration, Braaten believes that a new order of creation has been established. With this understanding church and state should wake up to this modern environmental crisis.
Call to Wakeup

One Sunday, soon after worship (World Environment Day) one of the visitors of my church approached me and said “Pastor what you have preached was good but we trust in the Lord, How can you say all this from the Pulpit?” How can we violate our doctrines? Being a traditional Christian I cannot accept this.” He concluded by saying that he was disagreeing with me. He was a retired central government servant.

David G.Horell and Conradie compared the doctrines with lenses and called this doctrinal lenses. The traditional churches exegetical undertakings are views from a certain theological and social context, and a doctrinal lens attempts to provide a consistent theological viewpoint by bringing certain biblical texts into sharp focus and blurring or giving less weight to others. Traditional examples of doctrinal lenses are Luther’s “Justification by faith alone” or Calvin’s “sovereignty of God.” From the beginning ecological importance was blurred in the church and in religious institutions. Joel 1:5 says “Wakeup you drunkards and weep and wail all you wine drinkers over the sweet wine”. We are fully loaded with these doctrines and never give any scope to see the scripture in any other perspective. Ecological perspective was blurred and we probe only the learned doctrines. Our drunkenness relates to the doctrines and in modern terms a lethargic indifference to an inequitable consumerist society that provides short-term comfort and ease. Hence we have to wake up and adopt re-reading of the scripture from an ecological perspective which will help in sustaining the environment and enable a God, human and non human relationship.

Pope Francis in his first Papal encyclical said humanity’s “reckless” behavior has pushed the planet to a perilous “breaking point”. Pope left little doubt about who is to blamed- Big businesses, short-sighted politicians, scurrilous scientists, laissez-faire economists, indifferent individuals, callous Christians and myopic media professionals. Will this criticism be accepted positively?

Conclusion

Our modern ecological crisis is unprecedented and needs to be closely attended to. Horrell proposes some lenses that might be useful for eco-theology: the goodness of all creation, humanity as part of the community of creation, interconnectedness, the covenant with all creation, creation’s calling to praise God, and liberation and reconciliation for all things. Neil W. Bergmann discussed in his paper “ecological appropriation of Joel” about 3H frame work suggested by Mohammed Abu-Nimer in his research paper. This acknowledges that ethical responses occur in three stages from Head to Heart to Hands. A majority of people already have “head knowledge” about the importance of creation, and care for the environment. The ecological perspective readings of the Bible will enable us to translate head knowledge into heart knowledge and only the love of God can translate heart knowledge into “hands-on” action, which would help to conserve the environment.

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Introduction

There was a time when the developing countries thought that the ecological crisis was not serious problem and did not concern them. But today this issue has to be addressed immediately by the whole world in order to prevent total disaster. The life of the planet is endangered. The ecological crisis raises the problem of survival. Moreover, there is a growing awareness of the organic link between the destruction of the environment and socio-economic and political justice. The present day ecological crisis which includes, massive pollution of air, water and land, environmental degradation threatens the very life of the earth, fast depletion of non renewable resources, the thinning of the ozone layer that exposes all living creatures to the danger of radiation, increasing erosion of the sea, over population, hunger, waste dumps, e-waste and other problems are really threatening the life on this earth. Therefore, threats to the environment are threats to our own lives. Romans 8 talks about the lamentable state of the creation and it is very frequently used in connection with the concern for the earth. Due to the growing ecological crisis, much attention has been drawn to this passage in recent past. Romans chapter 8 is considered as the central chapter of the book of Romans. This chapter is central because Paul presents his theology of salvation in this chapter. To Paul, salvation has both cosmological and anthropological dimensions. In addition, this chapter is intricately woven into the eschatological dimension of Pauline theology. The Bible reading selected Romans 8:18-25 states “Creation is under threat and waiting earnestly with hope for its salvation, or redemption.”

Frustrated Creation: First Picture

Why is creation groaning? Nature has a way of frustrating us, and at times even frightening us. Think of the recent Tsunami, Earthquakes and floods, untimely rains and no rains, global warming, consumerism, unequal distribution of natural resources, ongoing race to acquire a nuclear capability, increasing poverty and violence, and other manifestations of patriarchy, not only in our country but all over the world, life itself is threatened. The whole creation is groaning and in pain. The physical oikoumene, the whole inhabited earth, is distressed, being choked, polluted, desecrated and decimated every day. Think about disease, unheard of bacteria and epidemic around both in our country and the world.

Sometimes nature can frighten us; nature often frustrates us. However, in this text, the apostle Paul suggests that nature itself is frustrated. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.” When sin came into the world; it did not only affect human beings; it also affected creation. There is no question that we would like a life without the effect of sin; however, Paul says that even creation wants a life without the effect of sin, in the hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Frustrated Creation: Second Picture

There is a second picture that Paul uses to show us that creation is frustrated. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” Think about that picture. No woman would voluntarily experience childbirth if she did not expect to hold her newborn in her arms in the end. She goes through painful
ordeal because she knows something better is yet to come. In the same way, God’s creation endures sin and frustration because it knows that it is going to be released from sin’s bondage in the end, which is yet to come. This can be a hard truth to swallow, because we would like to think that we can solve all human problems in this life. We like to think that creation’s best life can be right now. We will find a cure for all disease, put an end to famine and world’s hunger, achieve peace among all nations, make poverty a thing of the past, get gas prices to go down and the economy to go up. However, if we think we can achieve that, or if we make that our primary purpose and mission, we will have missed the point that our sin affects creation as much as it affects us. Sin frustrates creation. The world is in a real sense going to hell metaphorically and because of our own sin. We cannot even begin to talk about our best life now because our life now is filled with innate rebellion against God and inevitable disdain for one another and towards creation.

Paul is not just thinking here about the deliverance of humanity. Coming into his field of vision, he is speaking of the deliverance of the entire created world. The sin of humanity does not cause suffering on human beings alone, but extends to the entire created world and ultimately causes destruction to the world. Thus, two thousand years ago, long before we saw the environmental destruction by mankind, Paul heard the groaning voice of nature. Eventually when humanity is delivered from sin then entire created world too will be delivered. Therefore, Paul wrote, “Creation is waiting earnestly with hope for the appearing of the sons of God.” We are groaning all the time along with creation, but we wait in hope for the time of deliverance. It is as if we hear the cry: “Warning! The earth is fragile, handle with care!” Under these circumstances what should be the response of the church today?

Act of Covenant Community

The Churches should enter into the Act of Covenanting Community to promote “Liberative Salvation” of the oikoumene. The term ‘covenant’ has to be understood in a broader sense. God’s covenant with Abraham was set within the framework of history and the Sinai covenant, which affirms God, has continued care and commitment to the human structures and law. On the other hand, the significance of Noahic covenant is cosmic. God is faithful in his promise to the whole humanity and all of his creation; God’s covenant is a covenant that continues to be in work, for the salvation of creation. Salvation as we know is nothing but “liberation, liberation from ...”. We need to affirm that the liberation that is witnessed in the Bible includes liberation for the entire creation. According to Paul, in Romans, the work of the Spirit, freedom, extends to the total renewal of Creation. Christ’s work of redemption takes in the whole universe (Rom 8:19-23). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who initiates a process of transformation that moves towards cosmic release (Eph. 1:1-10; Col. 1:15-20). The theme of Romans is the unity between the hope for the liberation of the children of God and the hope for the liberation of the entire physical creation from its bondage and oppression. The work of the Spirit is to renew all of the earth. The Greek term ἔκτισις, translated as Creation, included not only women and men, but all created things and is in the search for liberation of all aspects of human life, histories, cultures and natural environment, that we can truly affirm that salvation is the wholeness of creation. We can notice the similarity between the interpretation of liberation as a historical process in exodus and the liberation process in Creation in Romans. The liberation in Exodus is linked to the cry of the oppressed; whereas in Romans, the glorious liberty is promised in response to the groaning and travails within us and in creation. In Exodus, God heard the cry of the poor and takes their side. In the same way, in Romans, the renewal of the earth comes in response to the cry of the poor and of the dumb creatures, and of silent nature. (cf. Jonah 4:11)

We need to commit ourselves for the vision of human wholeness, which includes not only our relationship with one another, but also our relationship with nature and the universe. Therefore, Creation is waiting for the liberation from human destruction. May the God of Creation liberate both human and creation from the bondage of sin and oppression.

Threats to environment are the threats to Earths life.

Bibliography


Nature Groaning

O lord, our sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set a glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon on the stars that you have established; ‘what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than god, and crowned them with glory honour. You have given them dominion over the works of yours hands; you have put all things under their feet, All sheep and oxen, and also the beast of the field, The birds of the air, and fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ’ O lord, our sovereign how majestic is your name in all the earth! Psalm 8: 1-9

Christians have gathered several times in many places to discuss about ecological crisis and cosmic centred justice and in all these deliberations the prime focal point has been the concern of the poor. These stories have given a human face, to the concept of global warming and the irony of human interactions with fellow human beings and other created beings. These situations are dramatic expressions of the fact, that affects life of not only human beings but all forms of life. There have been warning voices from the early days of the industrial revolution, but they were considered as reactionary. Technological progression and economic growth resulted in innumerable environmental problems. The toxic emissions along with biased elite centred economic policies have deprived and demeaned life. Chemical revolution has also opened up flood gates of food chain crisis, threat to health, dangerous holes in the ozone layer and so on. Consequently the poor of the world, the Dalits, the women, the children and all the subservient communities in their own context are the most affected and there by subject to violence and suffering.

The story of Kadappa will help us to listen and look how the creation is groaning and need for human beings to open up to ecological concerns. The forest department is taking measures to conserve the habitats of the elusive bird, ‘Jerdon’s Courser’, called Rhioptilus bitorquatus by Ornithologist, it is known as Kalivi kodi in local parlance The bird is endemic to the Lankamalla forest in Kadapa dist, and the forest department proposed a project to conserve the bird and its natural habitats at a cost of Rs 6 crores. The rare species of the bird was first discovered by the naturalist Thomas C Jerdon in 1848 and was named after him. It was not seen for many years and was discovered in 1986. In that year a Carcass of the bird was found by one Ithanna which raised the curiosity of the ornithologists at Bombay natural history society. Since then several studies have been carried out on the bird and its habits and habitats. The state government too evinced keen interest in conserving the rare bird which is endemic to one of the districts in the state. Even the canals of the Bramhamam Sagar were redesigned in order to save the habitats of Kalivi kodi. According to DFO Vinod, as many as 100 remote cameras were setup in different locations in the Lankamalla forest sanctuary to study the bird and, in the process, discovered other varieties of fauna in the area. Though nature lovers emphasise the need for conserving the habitats of Jerdon’s Courser, the local populace dependent on the forest produce continue to disturb it. Forest officials demand that alternative source of income be provided to such people so that they no longer disturb the habitats of kalivi kodi: “there is every need to protect and conserve such rare species as the wonder of the nature, once lost, can never replaced,” says Rahul Chowhan, and Ornithologist, who had seen the elusive bird in 2008.

It is in such a brutal real life scenario we are called to reflect upon the biblical text that was read to discern Christian participation in such a polluted environment. The read text suggests to us deeper issues of life
where creation is in bondage because it was and is subjected to various bondages because of the corrupt powers that have continued till day annihilating life. The writer does not for example re-dress the tribulation of the world by fixing our attention upon the compensating harmony of another world. No careless attitude to the present tribulation can stand even before the aching of a tooth, and still less before brutal realities of birth, sickness and death, before the harsh reality which governs the broad motions of the lives of humans and the stern destiny of nations. Beneath these harsh miseries of human life stands a clear visibility of vast ambiguity of its infiniteness.

In such a situation, creation still groaning has nothing to do but wait and hope. God reckons with us precisely at the doors of suffering. God’s presence justifies and teaches us through the divine spirit. This passage juxtaposes hope with suffering and this juxtaposing is an outcome of the suffering of Christ and the community which believed and articulated it. Along with groaning what is positive about the read passage is the aspect of awaiting, a desire of hope, but to wait is the profound truth of our normal, everyday life and work greater apart from being Christians. Every agricultural labourer, every mother, every truly active or truly suffering person along with the groaning mother earth knows the necessity of positive energy in the midst of suffering that enables us to challenge the notion of death and decay.

Having understood deeper truths embedded in the text, what I intend to do is to draw your attention to two aspects that will do justice in our participation and pursuit of cosmic centred justice, which are positive and which are directly related to all that lives and prolongs life in the margin.

And the two aspects are:

1. Musing the sufferings of the innocents

Today the world is facing several ecological issues, such as lack of right to water, lack of waste management, lack of sanitation, land degradation such as deforestation and desertification, imbalanced bio-diversity due to loss of species, agricultural intensification, usage of synthetic organic insecticides, global change due to imbalances of natural gases global warming, increase of forces rivalling natural processes that modify climate change, landscapes, mining of minerals in subaltern zones, air tightening in which we breathe the same air, air conditioning, urbanisation and suburbanisation, rapid increase of transport and mobility, the three common pollutions such as air, water and noise and lack of pollution abatement and environmental greed of the present generations which makes loss of environmental sustainability. All these harsh realities can be understood as the result of the elites greed, and the most affected are the poor, the women, the dalits, the tribals, and the children along with Mother Nature. In this secular world, there were national and international conferences and protocols to sustain and conserve nature but only to have them flawed in its executions because of our own bureaucrats. Thereby we have a context which is life-threatening. In such a changed and changing context our Christian commitment I propose is to contemplate on this reality and hear the cry and groaning of the suffering community. The collective plea of the margins also voices out the cry of the suffering God, hence our move forward is a faith journey responding to the suffering God and nature, to preserve, cherish, and celebrate God’s creation which has been tarnished.

2. Opposing agencies that deliberate oppression:

K. C. Abraham one of the leading theologians of the country notes that, the era of the body is the period of the discovery of the physical force. This gave rise to science and technology. A conquest of the earth followed with the exploitation of its resources to satisfy the unlimited human desire for consumption. The capability of human intelligence has risen to inexorable heights. But the contradiction of this is that earth has lost its vitality. The industrial paradigm is a product of this era. It is said we are in danger of worshiping that which is not God. Idolatry of technology, consumer goods, of human control of corporate power is at the heart of the collective and individual sins which constitutes the environmental crisis. From this above observation what I understand is, through these idolatrous spirituality dominant humans have not only subjugated innocent humans and all that lives in nature, but this sporadic movement has also subjugated the divine and has understood the divine as a agency through which they are strengthened. Having merged in such an inhuman culture has only caused collective groaning where God, human and other creatures are subjected to violence. It is in such a demeaning context we are called to
be servants of our crucified Guru, it is in His suffering we understand the suffering of many, and it is in His resurrection and promise of coming, our hope is grounded. It doesn't mean that we are to be patient in this suffering on the contrary a true Christian commitment would be that which challenges and confronts the plunderers of the world, it is in this quest for justice we are called to suffer, and in this suffering depend upon the divine and look ahead in hope of a day where the forests will be admired and adored, where humans will relate with each other in love and also with the other creatures. As Luther understands the creation and its creatures as the mask of God, so we are called to recognise and adore the divine in the other, and the other could be a human or a non human.

Conclusion
Thus we have come to know that the entire creation along with the divine are groaning and the simple and the innocent too groan with them which we have experienced and witnessed in our day to day lives. So it is our responsibility to bring in strategies of resistance by distinguishes between good and bad for the entire creation then framing in perceptions and ideologies, which concern the nature and finally counter the destructive forces which are prevalent among the dominant destructive groups and finally become full fledged citizens in the reign of God and full fledged members of the creation of the God.

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Peace: Earth Longs For…
P. Bethel Krupa Victor

“Glory to God in the highest heaven and on Earth peace among those whom he favoured.”
Luke 2:14

Introduction/Problem
My pastoral ministry invariably involves visit to rural areas. During such visits, often I hear people saying, “we are without work and we do not have food because there is no rain and famine prevails all over. No cultivation, therefore no work. If at all there is cultivation, the machines have replaced human labour in the fields and machines do the manual jobs such as cutting the acres of paddy fields and other crops within no time, collecting the grains and re-rooting the paddy plants and etc. We do not know how we are going to survive. We are in dire need of food and labour to survive on the Earth. Life has become miserable on this Earth…”

Another person reported, the Earth is not yielding fruits in spite of using all modern farming technologies and pesticides. I trusted the Earth and the Earth has deceived me…

Still others say, ‘we are stricken with unknown diseases, our women and children are mal-nutritious, anaemic; suffer from diseases such as chronic pains in the body, uterus problems such as cysts, fibroids and others. Why there are so many problems? What is the reason? I guess, it
is due to Earth’s anger on us. Who can appease the earth? Yes! The Earth is angry with us.

The above acclamations clearly entails that there is no peace on Earth and the Earth is suffering greatly due to various irresponsible human activities and exploitations of non-renewable resources, in short, the whole of God’s creation. Therefore, Earth, which God created and declared to be good and suitable for life has turned out to be a place where mourning, deception, anger and threat of extinction of the whole creation. All these situations clearly indicate that the Earth is longing for Peace - peace with God, peace with human beings and with the whole of God’s creation. Earth is longing for peace: peace, not invented by human beings but a peace that was promised by God.

The Reasons for this Predicament
Ecology concerns the life of the Earth. It is about organisms and their relationship with their environment. There are different factors, which are responsible for rapidly degrading the capacity of the Earth to support life. Never before have had human beings wielded so much power over creation, exploiting its resources by means of a ‘flow-through-economy’. It is a process of tapping the creations wealth and exploiting nature’s resources without replenishing them and polluting the surroundings so that not even nature can repair it. This is the status of our planet. This poses ethical issues of paramount importance. When God created the Earth, everything was good and balanced. God blessed them, and God said to them, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over everything that moves upon the Earth” (Gen. 1:28). God blessed them and gave them the responsibility to protect the creation, to continue the creative work of God and to ensure the peaceful co-existence of all that is created - between people and between people and the whole of creation. Hence, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and they share in God’s work of bringing peace and order in the world. The privileged place given to them is not to exploit in order to gain power and authority for the self. It is not for the glorification of the individual. Another definition of peace is to use the position and authority to subdue life on the Earth, the people, keep them under fear, instill a sense of instability or uncertainty about their life and work and declares that there is peace everywhere, a kind of forced peace. Consequently, the whole creation is forced to submit to the brute power and authority of selfish human beings almost reaching extinction. The blessing from God demands not individual glorification but a life, a co-operation and support between the whole of God’s creation. It is a pattern of co-operation and integration between

As a result, we are at the brink of a total obliteration of our world. Fast depletion of natural resources and massive pollution of air, water and land have caused this perilous situation. All of us are affected by the ecological crisis, steady deterioration and degradation of the biosphere. Developmental paradigms are responsible for massive ecological devastation. All living beings share the aftermath of ecological devastation. It is an issue of life and survival for individuals, the Earth, and the future generations. If not tackled carefully; it would certainly lead into the extinction of life, and the very existence of individuals, families, and countries would be in danger. Our selfish deeds and desires have created enmity between human beings and creation and destroyed peace on the Earth that was bestowed on us freely by the creator God. Let us meditate upon the text (Luke 2:1-14) keeping as the base for our meditation.

1. Peace - God’s Gift
God is a God of peace. God created the heaven and the Earth, Land and Sea, Plants and Trees, Sun and the Stars, Animals and Birds and finally created human beings in his image and likeness. Human beings are created in a special way to be the crown of creation. Adam and Eve enjoyed life in Eden and there was shalom. They ate and drank everything that were permitted. God walked with them, talked with them and they enjoyed all the privileges and peaceful atmosphere. God blessed them and gave them a responsibility to protect the creation, to continue the creative work of God and to ensure the peaceful co-existence of all that is created - between people and between people and whole of creation.

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and they share in God’s work of bringing peace and order in the world. The privileged place given to them is not to exploit in order to gain power and authority for the self. It is not for the glorification of the individual. Another definition of peace is to use the position and authority to subdue life on the Earth, the people, keep them under fear, instill a sense of instability or uncertainty about their life and work and declares that there is peace everywhere, a kind of forced peace. Consequently, the whole creation is forced to submit to the brute power and authority of selfish human beings almost reaching extinction. The blessing from God demands not individual glorification but a life, a co-operation and support between the whole of God’s creation. It is a pattern of co-operation and integration between
people and the whole of creation. The character of created world is not subjectivity but interdependence. Each one must help to sustain the other and not destroy God’s work (Ps 24:1; Gen 1:13; 3:17).

The relationship between the human beings and the plants and animal kingdom including the natural resources is one of healthy co-operation and mutual recognition. It is neither individual domination nor group domination. Due to the wickedness of people, the worldly life style, commercialization, urbanization, and real estate business, turns the agricultural lands into saleable and re-saleable products, land acquisition for developments of townships. The democratic government as power holder has to support the poor, the weaker sections of the society but they use their power to acquire more for selfish motives. Any authority is not absolute, but it must be rooted and grounded in God’s grace and power. It cannot be a parallel power. If the power and authority is to be used to continue God’s work in this world, then the concern towards others and justice towards others would override concern for the self and all acts of self-glorification. Peace is God’s character and it is exhibited in and through God’s creative work and the human beings are invited to uphold the peace of God’s creative order by being in mutual relationship, mutual care and support of each other.

2. Peace – God’s blessing

God’s desire is that the Earth be filled with Peace. Birth of Jesus Christ on this Earth has brought the blessing of peace to all and is freely given to his people. The angels declared “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on Earth peace among those whom he favoured.” Peace is the end result of the blessings received from God. Peace originates from God and that is why Paul said that peace is something that passes all human understanding, hence it is divine. Prior to the birth of Jesus the prophets spoke about the day of the Lord as one of the universal peace. Prophet Isaiah said that “For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, people shall beat their swords into ploughshares …” (Isa 2: 2-4). Prophet Isaiah envisaged a Davidic King would come in the future, “Prince of peace” endowed with God’s spirit and wisdom, in whose reign the poor will be judged with justice and the wolf will live with lamb (Isa.9:6-11). The Lords coming into this world as the Incarnate Son of God ushered us the peace that was promised and foretold thus Jesus Christ is our peace.

Peace is attained on the merit of our relationship with God and His creation. Jesus Christ is the redeemer. Christ redeemed from all that hinders human beings from having right relationship with God, the Creator and with the creation through His life and work on the Earth. Today due to ecological imbalance and crisis, people are plundered without peace within and without and are in requirement of peace that passes all understanding and peace that justifies the sinner with the sinned against (Rom. 5:1; 8th chapter). Creation is groaning to experience peace that God had bestowed on Earth. Jesus reconciled the whole creation, with God and the human beings and continues to renew it, preserve it and sustains it for those who trust and care for his creation. God’s peace comes to us through the life and death of Jesus Christ. God is at work of renewing the Earth, recreating life and restoring the Universe for our good. Hence, Prophet Isaiah declares that, the Lord says, “For I am about to create a new heaven and a new Earth; the former things shall not be remembered.” (Isa. 65:17). Christ the prince of peace has come into this Earth to transform Earth as His abode where His eternal presence dwells among all who care for His creation.

3. Peace- God’s Reward

Bible gives the highest priority to obedience, which is better than sacrifice. Obedience is one of the greatest Christian virtues. In the creation narratives we read that God said to Adam do not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the centre of the Eden garden. As long as they obeyed the commandment, they had closer fellowship and friendship, mutual trust and God’s grace on them. However, when they disobeyed and ate the fruit that was forbidden, disobedience has entered. As a result, they found themselves naked, away from God and God’s Fellowship and finally, they were sent away from the Garden and lost everything when they misused their freedom to disobey. Peace is disturbed by disobedience. Obedience is not just hearing His voice and His commandments but keeping them in action and practice. Disobedience brought destruction in their peaceful life. When man disobeyed God, estrangement had taken place. Consequently, their relationship with God and with each other has been destroyed (Ps. 51:3,4).
Further, human beings relationship with nature was also destroyed. In Eden, God said to both of them, be blessed, be fruitful and multiply, replenish the Earth, subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and fowl of the air and every living beings that moves on the Earth. When they disobeyed, they were driven out of Eden. Nature became their enemy, because human beings dominate creation and continues to destroy the nature and the nature in return is destroys and continues to destroy human beings on many occasions.

God rewards us for all our deeds. He promises a great peace in the life of the Israelites (Lev. 26:6). This promise will be fulfilled only when they feared the Lord and obeyed Him and His commandments. The promise of peace on Earth is fulfilled only when human beings mend their ways, care, have respect, and regard towards God's creation. It is high time for the human beings to turn to God in obedience to their calling to tend and keep God's handwork and to enjoy the peace that God had promised to all who obey to His commandments and do the will of God.

May the good Lord help us to turn to God in repentance and to set right the relationship between the creator and the creation in order to experience the fruit of the Spirit - peace on Earth. Amen.

References

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Peace with Water – Peace with Gos

C. Jerin Sester

“. . . and one who gives water will get water.” *Proverbs 11:25b (NRSV)*

Depletion of ground water is a critical ecological crisis today. My house is located in a village named Poolangudi Colony, Trichy District, Tamil Nadu. It comprises of nearly one thousand families of whom the majority are working in industries (OFT, BHEL). One third of the village was, once occupied by agricultural fields. But unfortunately those fields are now being converted into plots for sale, as there was 'no water' for farming. The stream that passes through the village also runs dry most of the year, owing to the failure of monsoons in Tamil Nadu for the past few years. However, the fundamental reason is the depletion of ground water. Similar issues are apparent even in terms of bore wells. Once the water was drawn at one hundred feet but at present it is very difficult to find water even at one thousand feet.

Groundwater is one of the most valuable natural resources. It is required for drinking, domestic needs, agriculture, etc. It is also to be noted that people are responsible for this predicament. One of the main reasons for the depletion of ground water is sustained pumping. This depletion of ground water further results in drying up of wells, reduction of water in streams and lakes. As water is said to be the “elixir (medicine) of life,” an issue related to that resource itself is highly serious. Therefore, we should maintain a balance in using such resource so that in return it
will sustain life on earth. With this understanding, I would like to draw attention to a few Biblical points.

The Bible treats water as a concept of reality. It is called the ‘water of life’ (Rev. 22:1). In the Book of Proverbs, the wise Solomon clearly states in the chapter 11:25, “and one who gives water will get water.” This statement clearly points out to the early realities of the consequences of one’s action. The Wisdom literature always brings out the contrasts of both realities, i.e., good and evil. Therefore, with every action comprising good or bad, it has its own ends, according to the law of the Old Testament. In the New Testament too Gal. 6:7 says, “for you reap whatever you sow.” Thus, considering the valuable natural resource ‘water’ in this context, I wish to derive a few points from the Bible, which will certainly direct us in the right path to care for this depleting water resource.

1. Water-the Elixir of Life

The phrase “one who gives water” can also remind us constantly about the other factors of sharing. To put it in simple words “one who withholds water” is the opposite factor. This further reminds us about the existing dual realities among the people; one who wants to give water and another who wants to withhold water. The social scenario of our country may project several aspects that withhold one responsible for the growth of water resources. In the name of development, cities expand to great extent and the natural resources are damaged. Today, we can witness agricultural lands being transformed into plots; the water resources being blocked or damaged. As a result, in our day-to-day lives, we can witness extensive constructions consuming the water resources, streams, etc. Moreover, the failures of monsoons occasionally adds up to the decline of underground water resources. This explains the result of low level water even in the aquifer (underground bed or layer yielding ground water for wells and springs, etc). Technological development may be advantageous; but the damage it causes to nature is irreparable.

The Word of God calls us to be the ‘one who gives water’. Being aware of the atrocities done towards the natural water resource, we are called to let the streams of water flow naturally without damaging it in the name of development, and thus give life to the creation of God. Our Lord, Jesus gave his life for the eternity for humankind. Likewise, we are called to give our life for the entire creation. By protecting the life of all life forms on earth, we can live as witnesses of Christ, the basic vocation of every Christian.

2. Water- God’s Gift

The reward “will get water” carries several meanings. The intention to preserve God’s creation makes one to be the channel of God’s blessings to society. The reward transcends from an individual blessing to a corporate blessing. As we make way for God’s creation in their sustenance of life, we also participate in God’s plan which will eventually establish God’s reign on earth. Here Solomon breaks the human-centered view, where one keeps the resources of God for the self. Human beings tend to take God-given natural resources for granted and deny meeting the needs of other fellow human beings and also to nature. Due to this attitude, people struggle on the one hand, and on the other they waste invaluable resources. Solomon proposes the idea of sharing in the selected verse. One who gives water will get water clearly explains the idea that they will receive the blessing of God generously. The balance of resources is the central point where one must be responsive in order to bless the creation of God.

The phrase ‘will get water’ calls for mutual sharing of resources. We should not monopolize creation, especially on water. People monopolize water which result in wastage and depletion of water resources. For instance, the industrial stream has polluted water in several ways, and claim to possess the monopoly of water resources. The water is seen only as a commodity in our times. To balance the resource is very simple; all it requires is that we should use only what is required. Therefore, whenever one uses more than is required it will affecting others. The word of God calls us to disown the authority over water; and calls us to embrace water as a gift of God.

3. Water- Promise of Life

We know that water has become an inevitable part of life on earth. However, the gravity of it is not wholly imbibed by humanity. Therefore, I would like to direct our attention towards the divine perspectives on water. Throughout the Bible we can see God being associated or identified with life giving water. In Jeremiah 2:13, God has been described as ‘fountain of living water’. In John 4:10, Jesus promises the Samaritan woman ‘living water’. In all these instances we see the importance of water. This very
realization indicates that anything that is against water is against God. But in the following verses of John 4:14, Jesus says, “those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” Here, it is evident that those who are blessed by God become a blessing to the whole creation. Explaining the importance of life-giving water, Jesus calls the Christians to be the channels to uphold the importance of water to the society we live in.

Finally, one must understand the fact that nature belongs to the whole creation and not only to human beings. For that matter, we are also a part of nature. We are created to live in harmony with each other nurturing and protecting each other. “One who gives water will get water” pronounces this message of the Kingdom of God; the message that creates an awareness of sharing and giving space for the other entities to survive; not only treating these as a commodity but also to treat them with respect. “One who gives water will get water” calls us to turn back to God’s creation. Self-centeredness must be uprooted, and we must be transformed into a channel of blessing, enabling all the life forms of God’s creation. In the words of Robert Barry Leal, an ecologist, “If we remember that ‘mere’ water is an important aspect of ‘God’s living water’, we shall view this gift from God with an enlightened, ecological eye.” Thus, respect for the life giving water sustains the life of every being on earth. Being at peace with water helps us to be at peace with God, the Sustainer of all life. May God of all creations, help us to maintain peace with water, the invaluable resource, so that we also shall maintain peace with the creator of that invaluable resource. Amen.

Bibliography
But since 2014 the mango production has come down and the farmers suffered a great loss, and consequently, many of the farmers were forced to dispose off their mango orchards and sell the land to industrialists and realtors around Rs. 2 to 3 Crores per acre. Further, the usage of agricultural land for industrial and housing purposes polluted the land which in turn affected the mango seeds, and decreased the mango production. Moreover, the odd weather conditions hit the mango production and unseasonal rains have devastated the crops, which adds to the farmers woes. Therefore the mango farmers, who were economically, socially and politically backward, remain as silent sufferers of their hopeless future. Thus the industrialists and realtors use of agricultural land for industrial trading purpose pollutes the land and as well climate change affects the mango production and the life system of the farmers.

As an American writer Kurt Vonnegut says “… flaw in the human character is that everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance,” human beings disappointed their Creator with their new scientific creations, instead of maintaining God’s creation. One of the major corollaries that human beings bring on the other life forms through their action of creation is ‘Climate Change’. Climate change is neither just ‘political issue’ nor a ‘spiritual sign’ as many like to contend, rather it is the consequence of the human flaw. This is at the very heart of the command of God for us to choose life or death today and to remember that it has long term effects on the future of the created order. Hence, we are in the ideal time to remind our faith communities that justice for the climate and God’s created order are a necessary part of our faith journey.

1. Human flaw: Vulnerability of Climate Change

Throughout the Earth’s history climate change was there well before human beings evolved. Nevertheless, the Scientists stepped in to evidently prove the main cause of the rapid climate change. Shockingly it is clear based on over a century of scientific investigation that human beings are responsible for much of the climate changes that have seen over the last 150 years. Numerous proxies, or indicators, including trees, ice cores, corals, lake and marine sediments, and historical documents give us plenty of evidences that, until the beginning of the industrial revolution, when fossil fuel burning began, natural forcing from solar radiation and volcanoes dominated temperature changes. But since the industrial revolution, especially in recent decades, the world’s atmospheric temperature, measured at many points around the world, has risen dramatically. 2014 was the hottest year on record worldwide, and the ten hottest years in history have been since 1998.

The world scientists agree to the fact that the Earth is warming and human activity is driving that change. Emission of greenhouse gases from power plants, cars, landfills, farms, cleared forests and through other subtle processes are responsible for the greenhouse effect that ultimately leads to global warming. According to the 2013 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “…CO2 concentrations have increased by 43% since pre-industrial times, primarily from fossil fuel emissions and secondarily from net land use change emissions.” Before the industrial era, CO2 levels in the atmosphere were 260-280 ppm (parts per million). Now they are 400 ppm, half again as high. They stated88% of human carbon emissions come from burning fossil fuels and manufacturing cement. The other 12% comes from deforestation and other land use changes. And therefore they have been able to confirm that the increase of CO2 has been caused primarily from the burning of fossil fuels and through other human activities, such as clearing forests, as well. When human beings burn gasoline, coal, natural gas, and other common fuels make electricity or use for cars, they release a substantial amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. For example, every litre of gasoline that a car burns, 1300 times that volume of CO2 is released. This increase, and changes in the type of CO2 being added to the atmosphere provide the “smoking gun” and acts like a blanket, trapping heat. The rise in the temperature level causes changes in the climate.

Jeremiah in 12:4 clearly depicts this picture of the flaws of powerful human beings that wrecked the existence of other beings, including the innocent cattle and plants. In the book of Jeremiah we can find many nature allusions as Skinner in his book “The Prophecy and Religion” rightly points out it saying “… we may find in Jeremiah’s poetry traces of a closer sympathy with the life of nature than in any prophet.” A complicating factor that disturbed Jeremiah was the fact that the prosperity given by God was being enjoyed by those evil men and they were flourishing at the cost of the lives of others. The lives of those evil men consternated God’s
creation of that land. As such the human-made changes in the climate poses fundamental threats to the places, species and people’s livelihoods. Earth’s diversity of life is at risk from the changing climate.

2. **Hopeless life: Survival Threat**

The choice of industrialistic life of human leads to Climate destabilization which respectively contributes to record droughts and famine, wildfires, monster snowstorms, earth quakes, powerful typhoons, hurricanes, unprecedented flooding and dangerous changes in ocean chemistry, land and threatening God’s creation order. The IPCC estimates that if greenhouse gas pollution continues at the present rate: the world will warm by more than 1.5°-2.0°C by 2100, and 2°C is widely recognized as a “danger level,” above which society will suffer serious consequences. Due to the changes in temperature the rise of sea level has been greater than the previous two millennia that causes drastic changes in the ocean and threatens the sea livelihoods and also affects the crop production. Owing to the failure of rain, summers get hotter, production decreases. The survival threats for the vulnerable in society are caused unfortunately by the oppressive industrialist class. I would like to substantiate this claim that the affluent society afflicts the vulnerable strata of the society in connection with the case study, which I mentioned in the introduction from my home town, Nuzvid.

The book of Jeremiah has draw attention to it and emphasized on the abuse of the oppressing class over the vulnerable strata of the society. Jeremiah 5: 23 – 28 depicts the picture of God’s providence for His people. We read that God has put boundaries to the seas and the waves; he provides the harvest by giving rain at set times. And from verse 23 it is said that because of the stubbornness of the people and their rebellious turning away from God, ‘good’ has been withheld from the people. Verses 26 – 28 condemns that people abuse others in order to become rich and the rich have ignored the most vulnerable in the society. The social injustices of the oppressing class, disobeying God’s order, caused the poor not to receive the good out of creation, which in this case probably means the rain.

Similarly Jeremiah 12:4 portrays the pathetic barren condition of the land of Judea that it brings forth no fruit, and the failure of rain, long drought makes the herbs of every field wither. And it brought out the cause for this collapse in the creation order. It says “because of the wickedness of the inhabitants of it, which consumes the beasts and the birds.” The land was cursed for the sins of men who dwell on them and it carried over God’s displeasure upon the inhabitants of the land. The land is full of mourning. But the oppressors in the land flourished while the inhabitants are perished. They have taken root and live at ease by oppressing the poor in the land. Jeremiah looked for the instant divine justice upon the dreadful human beings who caused this issue instead of dealing with them gradually.

Similarly in our context the poor and the vulnerable are in the trap of a hopeless future. The industrialists, who are the ruling classes, look for the development which exploits the helpless with the denial of the right to live. The industrial pollutants deny their right to live with the impact they bring on the climate stabilization. Right development is the development that fulfils the needs of all the inhabitants of the earth who are one of the sources for the development. The power discriminates the powerless through their injustice to the climatic cycle. The power enjoys the benefits of the development and pass over the annihilation to their fellow creations. The poor and the vulnerable are the least able to adapt and most affected by the climate crisis. In our case unlike the context of Jeremiah God is left helpless with tears seeing the termination which human beings bring on themselves and on their fellow creations and keeps the life of the future generation in jeopardy. Therefore God call us to be His instruments to give hope for the hopeless future of His creation.


A tendency of escapism from this serious issue prevails among the Christians with their over thwarted view by labelling all the climate destabilizations under the title of Christ’s second coming. Moreover, there is an implicit understanding in their world view, that the events in this world happen under God’s control. Interpreting this statement in the presence of obvious evil and injustice in the world is one of the great intellectual challenges of Christianity. Some evangelicals tend to proclaim the goodness of God and resolve this issue by simply declaring that God will provide all the needs of the believers if he/she follows God’s commandments. Social justice in the context of climate change resonates
far beyond the evangelical community. But many of the liberal protestant churches and some segments of the Roman Catholic Church taking it as a ‘keystone concept’ essentially focus on the issue that it is the poor and those with the fewest natural resources who suffer the most from climate change. Further outside the church in the secular community, there is an increasing number of activism on the ethics of climate change that speaks to the legacy this current generation is leaving for succeeding generations.

In fact, when the secular organizations are heading towards to safeguard the earth from dangerous emissions, protect human health and heal the climate, we Christians are escaping with our dumb ears and blind eyes. Giving hope for the hopeless is the challenging Christian responsibility before us. Jeremiah laments “how long shall the land mourn?” He grieves for the misery inflicted on the innocent by the wrong doing of others. Our heart should groan for the groaning creation and yearn for the time when all shall be renewed. But it should not stop just with it. Jeremiah 12:5 & 6 leads us with the ways to give hope for the hopeless. It is interesting to note how god administered the reproaches to the prophet. First it refers to the want of courage “if thou hast run with the foot men...” Whatever oppositions we face in this journey of fighting for climate justice, for the cause of truth and goodness we should brace up the energies of our soul with God given strength to bear it. Giving this hope strengthens the prophets by predicting several trials that are in store for him in the future. “Life is for us all a course of Divine discipline, in which all lesser tests of faith and fortitude are intended to prepare us for sterner conflicts and nobler victories.” With the arms we can lean ever we strengthen ourselves first for the more arduous journey ahead of us in our care and protection for all the life forms in God’s creations who suffer drastic changes in the climate. Let’s, as Christians, indulge in acting against the industrial pollutants for the hopeless in the creation order and demand our right to live. This is the most hopeful movement of our time. We emphasize the sustainable development for the common good of all.

Conclusion
Endangering the creations of God is the real challenge to the church in this context. The fact that God’s creations, including human beings become prey to the human activities, which affects the climate cycle, is an immediate issue that needs to be addressed. The church is called to rethink its ministry to promote sustainable development in the light of injustices against the climate that threatens the inhabitants of the earth and take a stand on the side of the helpless creations that become a prey for the industrialists’ affluent choice of life. With the God of Hope, we, as Christians, regret our flaws against the climate, take courage, prepare ourselves by choosing a life to live for the good of all and fight for the hope for our hopeless succeeding generations.

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God is the creator of all kinds of trees, plants, forests and human beings. Trees and plants are the source of essential nutrients supplied to human beings and natural bond exist between the two. As the plants and Trees nourish every human being in every season without expecting anything in return, so also human beings should understand their responsibility and work towards constructing a healthy green environment. Up to a certain extent the plants and the forests can survive without help but the life of every human being is dependent on these plants and trees as they are the source of Oxygen.

The main benefits of trees

1. Provides clean water: Trees intercept rainwater and slows it down by aiding soil absorption for gradual release into streams and cleanse ground water as it filters through their root system.

2. Trees are the source of economic growth: Timber production and other wood-based industries and paper product still comprise an important part of the economy of many countries. Trees also provide fruits, nuts, flowers and many other products of economic value.

3. A tree provides clean air: Trees helps to cool and refresh the air we breathe; the leaves take in carbon dioxide and release Oxygen for us to breathe. Carbon dioxide is a leading greenhouse gas that can contribute to global climate change. Trees also filter out harmful pollutants and provide us with Oxygen.

4. Mature trees improve our aesthetic environment; trees absorb noise, reduce stress and create a peaceful place to relax or socialize, providing positive mental benefits and healing qualities. Trees protect soil erosion and reduce landslides. Water from the roots of the tree is drawn up to the leaves where it evaporates. The conversion from water to gas absorbs huge amounts of heat cooling hot city air.

Trees manifest the beauty of god

Trees are the components of nature that always add the beauty to the creation of God. God looked at everything he had made, and saw that it was good. In this context, the Cypress tree may be taken as an example. The Cypress represents youthfulness, truthfulness and was also used to describe a person of upright character. It is said that in the presence of a Cypress, it would be impossible for one who takes in its breathes in its scent to be deceitful. Mystics have believed that because the Cypress is an evergreen and that its branches are never barren, it is truly liberated and liberating. The world's most famous Cypress trees dot the Pacific coastline with regal appeal. The Lone Cypress is an iconic natural treasure found along the 17-mile Drive in Pebble Beach, California. The Monterrey Cypress was planted along the California coast region because of its ability to adapt to wind and ocean conditions. But with all this being said, there is probably no better display of the beauty of the cypress tree than the one located in Point Reyes Station, California. The row of trees apparently create a tunnel which is a beauty to behold. It is at this vantage point one is able to admire the pure strength, and beauty, that this tree emanates. Since the Cypress includes both evergreen and deciduous trees, the branches differ from tree to tree. While the Leyland Cypress sports flat branches, the Pond Cypress has spiny offshoots. And while they may not share all of the same physical attributes, Cypress trees have one thing in common: they are havens for wildlife, birds are especially fond of Cypress
trees’ sturdy branches and needles that make for excellent nest-building material.

Though the beauty of the Lord, the creator of the whole-universe is invisible, the beauty of the Lord can be seen in the creation in every minute being. God’s marvellous beauty is manifested in his creation and in his act of liberation in liberating the whole creation.

**Trees promote Life**

Cypress trees have been long associated with death & healing and has a fascinating history, that dates back to the ancient Egyptians and the Greeks. Historians have documented extensively that the Egyptians used the durable trees to build mummy cases. In Greek mythology, it was believed that the Cypress grew out of the grief of a teenager who accidentally killed a deer that belonged to Apollo. It was out of this poor boy’s sorrow that the legend of the young Cyparissus is brought to life. Through his sadness and mourning, Cyparissus’ body was transformed into the tall, strong and noble looking Cypress tree. Out of his despair, he was transformed and brought back to life with a strong presence for many generations to come. He gave up all that he was and was made something new! The Greeks were also known to use its cypress wood to create urns to store the ashes of those who died in battle. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that Plato’s code of laws was etched into Cypress wood because it was thought to outlast brass. Ancients thought it an honour to be buried in a casket of cypress wood, and the wood has been used for the construction of coffins in many countries. Cemetery owners once felt that the fragrance would help to hide the scent of death, which led to the modern Turkish practice of planting a cypress tree on both ends of a grave. As far as healing goes, Cypress wood emits a fragrance that Far East Asian physicians thought to have healing powers. Physicians frequently sent patients with lung disorders and difficult breathing to the isle of Crete, where cypress trees grow in abundance.

Yet, the cypress is also considered a sign of life. In Genesis 6:14, the story of Noah and the Ark, God commands Noah, “So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.” In some translations this is called gopher wood. While it may never be proven what Noah made his ark from, cypress wood is known to be water-resistant, strong and durable. It is a commonly used wood in boat-making even today. Trees give life to the whole creation. The evergreen leaves have become a symbol of resurrection and new life.

A responsibility has been entrusted to us in nature to give life to the elements that gives life to us. In the 1970s an organised resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India and came to be known as the Chipko Movement comes from the word ‘embrace’ as the villagers hugged the trees, and prevented the contractors from felling them. Over the last few centuries many communities in India have helped save nature. One such is the Bishnoi community of Rajasthan. The original Chipko movement was started around 260 years ago in the early part of the 18th century in Rajasthan by this community. A large group of people from 84 villages led by a lady called Amrita Devi laid down their lives in an effort to protect the trees from being felled on the orders of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. After this incident, the Maharaja gave a strong royal decree preventing the cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages. It was a non-violent movement aimed at protection and conservation of trees from being destroyed. One name that seems to synonymous with Chipko is Sunderlal Bahuguna, a prominent leader, an activist and philosopher. He travelled 5000 km across the Himalayas spreading the message of the Chipkos to those he met. In 1989 he began a series of hunger strikes in protest against building of dams in the Himalayas. In fact, forests and trees can be protected through public movements like ‘Chipko’. The message of God the creator should go through us through our words and actions. God made all kinds of beautiful trees grow in the garden of Eden and produce good fruit (Genesis 2:8). In the middle of the garden stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good. God created this tree also like other trees beautifully and planted it among the trees, gave wisdom to man to make proper use of it. God intends man to protect his creation and protect himself by obeying his commands. But when man disobeyed His commands in the nature, he lost his life. The tree from which man had fallen into sin, the same tree saved him through Jesus, that is the cross of Jesus.

God is a green life-giving tree in midst of trees of other varieties. In the modern world other developmental structures stand beautifully in the place of trees and attract human being to find their life in them. People
are going astray from the beautiful tree which is standing among all these
trees. The evergreen God is able to give life to those who respond to him
positively by following his commands by fulfilling their responsibilities in
nature.

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) was practicing
idolatry, the Lord reminded them that He was the one who answered and
looked after them. He was like a luxuriant cypress, the symbol of the
Tree of Life. He provided all the food and productivity for Israel. We
may plant a tree and make it grow with water and manure. But it is the
Lord the author of the creation who gives life to it to grow, for God is
the source of all life.

Trees communicate the glory of God
In many cultures a tree symbolizes the world centre, where heaven and
earth meet, where all times and places converge. For this reason trees are
considered sacred and provide a focal point for meditation, enlightenment,
guidance and prayer and if we are open to their energy, will converse with
us.

Jeffrey Goelitz writes,

“The purest essence comes from the oldest trees who have peaked
developmentally in their being-ness. Older trees communicate to younger
trees a vibrancy that supports and encourages their growth. There is an
intelligence on the other side from which life springs. The force of gravity
helps us to live. Through gravity we receive light from the sky. Gravity is
the bridge to the other world where earth connects to the sky. Trees act
like magnetic funnels. Through their centres they draw heavily on the
light. [The Mother of the Forest and I] have a deep resonance of peace.
Our ages, sizes, and electromagnetic fields are very much alike. Together,
along with other elder redwoods, we watch over the forest with our etheric
radiation. Our rays interlace together in a way distinct from other trees
because of our similarities.”

Biblically, the Cypress tree stands tall too. In the Christian tradition,
the Cypress is a symbol of death, life and resurrection, and signifies the
heavens calling. With its column-like shape that reaches toward the heavens,
much like a church spire, the Cypress has a deep-rooted relationship with
the heavenly realm and divine light. Each and every component of the
creation communicate with the Lord its creator, without speech or words
(Psalms 19:1-4).

Communication is a very important aspect in life enhance better
relationship. In the evening God used to walk in the garden to communicate
and to have fellowship with man. But when Adam and Eve committed
sin, they hide themselves from God among the trees in order to block
their communication with God. They used tree as an instrument to break
down the communication with God. Then God took the initiative to revive
communication by asking “where are you?” (Gen 3:9). If the trees and
nature that are created and placed by God be used for our selfish motives,
then God is going to ask us the same question, “where are the trees”?

It is emphasized at the outset of the Old Testament that man is a
social being. God created mankind and said to them “Be fruitful and
multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the
sea, over the birds of the air, over every living thing that move on the
earth” (Gen 1:28; Psalm 8:6). God emphasized the creation maintained by
God. Protecting this God’s creation itself is the basic and most important
responsibility of the church. Care of the creation means caring for all of
God’s creation by stopping and preventing activities that are harmful and
taking part in the activities that further Christ’s reconciliation of all creation
to God. The creation was not created to be destroyed, but for the use of
man. Instead we see man using creation for selfish needs and have ended-
up causing hazards to mankind. Though we are taking many measures to
take care of it, we do not see anything happening around. The church has
to take the responsibility which is the need of the hour to take care of
the environment and all the resources that God has given.

Conclusion
Israel, the northern kingdom, is the primary focus of Hosea’s prophesy.
God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, established them as a
nation, and took great delight in them. He looked for a favourable response
to His love. But By participating in the pagan fertility rites of Baalism, the
people violated their covenant with the Lord. Hosea accused the nation of
being unfaithful to its vows just as his own adulterous wife had been
unfaithful to her vows. Hosea proclaimed that the Lord would eventually
restore His marriage with His people and again pour His blessings upon
them. So he says, I am like a green Cypress tree. He is beautiful, source of life and communicative. If we embrace him with repent of our sins we have done in creation, he will restore the relation with him. At the same time it is our responsibility to reconcile the whole creation with God. All creation groans with pain (Rom 8:22). But, waiting for liberation with hope (v21). If we fail in our responsibilities in creation, as the message gives us a warning in the word of God, on that day God calls heaven and earth as witnesses to see him judge his people (Psalm 50:4).

God is ever green and he wants all the components of his creation to be ever green, full of potential, hope and strength. God wants us to act as a channel in the whole creation.

Let us communicate with God to enable us to bring life and beauty in the whole creation for His glory.

Bibliography

And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Luke 9:58 (NRSV)

Problem
Valparai, a hill station near Pollachi is a fine example of the commercialisation of Creation. The main occupation of the people who live here is the cultivation of tea, which they learnt from the Britishers who used Valparai for the warmth and profit from the tea cultivation. The details of this very problem can be read in a book called Eriyum Panikadu. Here theologians have tried to theologise the pathos of the estate labourers by bringing out their pain from the colour of the tea they produce, the Red Tea Theology. While it speaks about the sufferings of the people who work as coolies in extreme diverse climate with a low standard of life, it fails to speak about the “Earth” whose acidic nature has been commercialised and exhausted. Forests have been logged, with the result these wild habitat which also was formerly the forest. In Valparai town people are easily spotting Cheetahs during night time hunting poultry and cows. Estate people try to eke out a living by chasing away elephants into the so called remaining forest cover. The number of cottages is increasing rapidly to cater to tourists, who casually pollute creation, because of excessive use of plastics and the resultant waste they create. The rise in number of cottages is not only a threat to humans who find it difficult
to find living space for rent, it renders the co-creation and its inhabitants homeless.

Relating With the Biblical Background
Traditionally this passage has been titled as “the Cost of Discipleship”. I just took this verse alone and tried to bring the truth that lies hidden beneath it. Since it is directly from the mouth of Jesus, the verse itself gains authority and thus serves as the context during Jesus’ time. “The pathos of human homelessness has been expressed by means of a contrast with the lot of animals in Plutarch, expresses the sentiment that the beast is more protected and persistent than the human creature”. This mutual coexistence with creation can be seen in this verse where Jesus speaks about the unhindered wild life habitat (fox) and untamed domestic habitat (birds). Though the people’s minds and hearts were corrupted by the Jewish religious leaders and Roman political leaders during that time, Jesus was able to bring out the uncorrupted Creation. The Creation’s habitat or oikos was never in threat. Hence, through suspicion the uncorrupted Creation of the earth has been identified that was during Jesus’ time in the text and through retrieval suggestion will be given for future sustenance.

Points to Ponder
1. “What now?” this is the question that is often asked when a person faces a real crisis. The person who asks this question will mostly be in emotional distress or what we call in psychological terms as “emotional leak or outburst”.
2. This question signifies the emergency for an immediate action on the part of the person who asks this question.
3. This question is always asked to a person who can help them out in times of crisis (confidant).
4. Even in theological terms when we speak about ‘eschatology and parousia’ for that matter, we always wouldn’t miss out the concept of “here and now”. We can understand this from Jesus’ statement that the Kingdom of God is here amongst us and it has already begun in Jesus Christ Himself. This question hence promotes and initiates “hope” for the hopeless in the present world and with the hope for the sustainable future ahead.

What Now?
Valparai is called as the “seventh heaven”. But heaven for whom? Who has control over the rich biodiversity? Certainly it is the tourists and the owners who have dominion over creation without “tiling it and keeping it”. Increase of tourism in Valparai has resulted in the increase in the number of cottages and inspection bungalows. This naturally has impacted the fauna and flora as well. The natural bushes on either sides of the road have been trimmed by the National Highways oblivious of the importance of its contribution to the Nilgiri Tahr. It is high time that the wildlife department realise the importance of creation and take necessary steps. The free flow of plastic covers, though banned shows the greed of human beings. Every individual should realise this critical situation.

Conclusion
What now? Immediate action is required to counter this critical situation. The forest officers in this area are working diligently to decrease the depreciation of creation in their own right. But it is high time that the churches take up this cause in their hands. If we have the values of Kingdom, we will work for conserving creation, even by risking our lives. People are always looking at the church as a confidant in times of crisis. We have to speak out the hidden voices that are suppressed in the biblical text by creating an ecological awareness among the congregation. It is not wrong in this context to arouse the ecological sensibilities of the people which were once intact.

As pointed above Jesus does not “hold possession” over his living space. But today we live amidst concrete jungles. Every individual’s desire for a home is natural, but a desire to own a skyscraper or a bungalow exceeds the limit. There are advertisements for growing trees like “each one, grow one”, it is high time we propagate about the houses in a similar manner. Even birds and animals use nests and holes only for growing their young ones and during extreme climates. After the young ones have grown they leave for a new habitat and thus nothing is permanent in their lives. But only human beings have this urge for immortality, permanency and so on... Thus we can learn lessons even from the foxes and birds as to how to live a frugal and meaningful life. There is a great difference between a need and a desire and it is high time people learn to pray for their daily needs. Christians should set an example for others to be
responsible stewards of creation and its resources for the sustenance of life on this earth. This is not an easy task, but it is not an impossible mission. Let’s build a better tomorrow, greener tomorrow and a greener life ahead for generations to come.

Eradicate corporate greed, Enrich communal living!

Bibliography

Introduction
The image of ladder or stairway to heaven has influenced the Biblical readers, contemporary theologians and even the secular people. The tradition which supports annihilationist or determinists’ views that earth is totally defeated and destroyed is so strong that the apocalyptic literature is often simply assumed to carry an annihilationist message. That interpretation fails to recognize the goodness of the earth. According to the eco-justice principles from this passage realizing that rock to rainbow is one unit. The dualism of heaven and earth is not maintained. The basic interpretation is that the heaven and the earth’s life is one community that can be termed as earth-centric community. The method of suspicion and retrieval is very much adopted. The suspicion is to suspect legitimately anthropocentricism and the dualism of celestial and earthly existence. And retrieval is to draw out the inherent values of earth community hidden in this apocalyptic passage, in which the total destruction of the earth community is emphasized. But in this sermon I would like to identify the earth community as a protective system of life. Earth community means nature and its components such as human beings, biological beings, cosmological beings and everything that is connected to the real life situation on this earth (Rock to Rainbow). The EARTH BIBLE TEAM

Background of the text

There are three Apocalyptic books in the Bible, two from Old Testament (O.T.), which are Ezekiel and Daniel; and one from New Testament (N.T.), that is the book of Revelation. Apart from these, there are several passages in the book of Isaiah, Zachariah, Psalms of the O.T. and Gospels and other passages in the N.T. Apocalyptic means unveiling the hidden things that are going to happen at the end of the history of humanity. The principal linguistic feature of apocalyptic literature is through visions. The entire message of the book of Revelation is composed of seven visions as seen by the writer John (1). Message to 7 churches 1:9-3:22 (2). Vision of the creator God 4:1-7:17 (3). Vision of the trumpets 8:2-11:19 (4). Vision of Church and Christ 12:1-14:20 (5). Vision of bowls 15:1-16:21 (6). Vision of great harlot Babylon (Rome) 17:1-20:15 (7). Vision of New Jerusalem 21:1-22:7. Apocalyptic literature is revealed through visions, numbers and signs and so the interpretation may not be understood literally. The message of Revelation was intended for the first century believers. They understood the message of Revelation in their own context and life situation. When we adopt the method of Earth Bible team interpreting the scriptures we can study the book of Revelation based on the Earth Bible eco-justice principles.

1. Vision of a New Heaven

Revelation 21: 1-8 speaks about the passing away of the first Heaven and the first earth and coming of a new heaven and a new earth from above down to the earth. The ecological unity of Heaven and earth is very much maintained as from heaven to earth all the components such as human beings, nature, the kith and kin of the earth community to be considered as an ecological unit. Also we can identify the retrieval of the earth community in this passage that the earth exists from the time of creation. Hence the earth is able to realize that the inherent value of the earth exists from the beginning in living and non-living things. The intrinsic worth of the earth is evident in this passage. The principle of interconnectedness of the earth community is clearly visible in verses 4&5. The human beings, their sorrows, tears, and oneness of earth community in which God identifies Himself with the human beings, nature and earth community is reflected. The reality of the happenings all speak about the interconnectedness of humans as well as ecology. In verse 6 too we can identify that the water of life again speaks about the unity of the earth community composed of human beings and nature as well. Though the words passing away and coming down appears to speak about the annihilation of the earth, we can identify that the entire episode takes place on the earth thereby sustaining the principle of mutual custodianship and the principle of purpose being maintained. Therefore in this passage we can identify the earth language of interconnectedness and ecological concepts which clearly deny the ladder to heaven image, instead, the ladder down to the earth is established and earth community receives glory.

2. Vision of the angelic showing of the New Jerusalem: Rev. 21:9-21

This portion of the scripture speaks about the angel showing the bride which is wife of the lamb and New Jerusalem. The words bride, lamb, high-mountain city, light, precious stones, gates, angels, tribes, children, the dimensions of the building namely North, South, East, West, wall, foundations, names, reed, length, breadth; speak about the ecology, the earth and its natural phenomena, the construction and so on. Hence, the principles of interconnectedness, purpose & mutual custodianship are obviously maintained and the eco-centric image is very clear. Though the western dualism appears in this passage, there is an attempt even in the dualism interconnected to life here and now and life to come; everything that happens in the earth environment. The earth and its importance were not annihilated but enhanced to higher values and worth. The ladder to heaven image is destabilised and ladder down to earth is established, thereby maintaining the ecological system.

3. The vision of the temple of Lord God Almighty & the Lamb: Rev. 21:22-27

In this vision of temple, the sun, the moon, the lamb, the nations, the kings of the earth, gates, and the Book once again reveal the environment
of earth, its components, and nature and its components. The inclusive language is very much concerned with the earth community which gives indication by remembering the teaching method for parables by Jesus. The symbolic language of the apocalyptic literature may convey many things but the symbolic influence is being demonstrated among the earth community that is from Rainbow to the Rock in other words, the ecological realm. Once again the mutual custodianship, the intrinsic worth, the interconnectedness are very clear that the human and earth community are interdependent, respect each other, human maintaining the temple and the temple maintained by human. God maintain the human- earth community and human-earth community maintaining God by worshiping Him.

The terms like purity, river of water, the throne, tree of life, fruits, leaves, healing, servants, names and above all the lamb are earthly concepts. The lamb is the messianic title attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the wife of the lamb the New Jerusalem is evidently an earthly concept. Husband and wife relationship and new Jerusalem are a symbolic concept including human beings as one unit, which is the wife of the lamb. Human beings are part of the earth community; nature, healing, light though they are symbolic, convey the meaning of ecological environment, the oneness of the earth community which again emphasize that the entire visionary episode happening on earth include everything from Rainbow to Rock (earth-centric). Here again the need of ladder up to heaven is not maintained instead the ladder covering the entire earth community and ecology is perfectly maintained thereby establishing the oneness of the entire universe, its value and mutual custodianship.

Conclusion
The above analysis of this text emphasizes that the earth community has immense value for everything that happens on the earth inclusive of the ecological sphere of the earth. For the traditional anthropocentric, Western influenced Ecclesiastic interpretations, heaven is supremely valued and the earth is utterly devalued and if the principles of Earth Bible Team are applied, and the methodology of suspicion and retrieval is used we would be able to read the six eco-justice principles from the chosen text positively.

This passage directly and indirectly speaks about the new heaven and the earth establish on earth coming from above down to the earth. We can identify the intrinsic value of the earth for this vision episode that takes place on the earth. We can also identify the principle of interconnectedness of heaven and the earth, the earth community as such is one unit, including the entire phenomena of nature and the environment. The principle of mutual custodianship of the earth community as kith and kin is maintained even in the given passage when it speaks about the entire episode happening from top to bottom in the universe. The principle of voice and resistance can be adopted as part of the earth community, the humankind destabilizing the image of ladder up to heaven and realizing the ladder from above down to the earth embedding the whole universal environment as one body.

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Earthing the Human

V. Paul Robert Kennedy

Genesis 1-3

1. Introduction

What is land? It is not just the solid ground of our abode? Why land? Why should one be concerned about land? Is land so worthy of our attention when there are so many other issues demanding attention and concern? Though it seems to be easy, answering these questions is difficult because of its inclusiveness, and its intrinsic value. The other word for land is earth. The land or the earth is not just a place where we sojourn or not just the ground of our abode. rather, the earth is the very creation of God. Created before any other creatures, and is cared and sustained continuously by God.

In the history of creation, earth and all in it were created earlier than the man was created (Gen:1-25). On the basis of the common policy adopted by everyone, we are obliged to give first priority to the whole creation which came into existence before humankind. In the creation story, we see that God created everything and saw that it was good and the goodness of God is seen in all creation. One among them is man who was created out of soil, after receiving the breath of God into his nostril, he came into being (Gen:2:7) and he was asked by God to till and guard the earth (Gen:2:15). In a way, we should acknowledge that the humankind is a product of the earth. Moltmann understands that the Ecological crisis is a crisis in the human relationship to nature, in human beings understanding of themselves in relationship to nature. Due to the improper understanding of human relationship with nature, the world in which we live is ecological imbalance that keep increasing day by day, affecting primarily human life and extinction of other species that are considered to be most important for the survival of man in this world.

2. Sow Good, Reap Good (Gen. 2:15)

The Hebrew word for the work (ABAD) is otherwise mostly commonly translated as “Service”. Since, humankind is taken from the soil, he must learn to love the soil in tilling it and guarding it so that it may in return, supply the food and all the necessary things for the sustenance of his life (Gen:1:29).

Just like the human language, all creations have their own voice. If it is not treated properly by humankind, it will certainly express its pain and agony its own language. If it is properly treated, it will express its joy and celebration of their life in the form of producing its goodness to humankind. Creation has its capacity to glorify God who is mighty in His deeds (Ps:19:1-4). So human being must learn to hear the voice of the nature, if we keenly understand the voice of the nature and try to do good, in return, it will certainly do good for our survival on this earth.

In reality, We have failed in our duty of protecting our land, when we examine the following statistics.

- 600 to 900 plants and animals became extinct
- 4,82,000 acres of arable land became desert
- 1.17 million acres of tropical forest were destroyed

God created everything with a purpose and we must try to understand the purpose and do the will of God. Since man was also created from the earth, mutual custodianship should be maintained. i.e., anything we get from others as a free gift, we must immediately acknowledge it by doing good to nature realising the fact that we as human beings have the mutual custodianship. If we failed in our of taking care of creation, it has the power to resist, in the form of natural disaster; finally, we reap the consequences, the adverse effects from the creation, just as we all witness
natural calamities like tsunami, earthquake, and other catastrophes are happening all over the world. God expects us to be responsible stewards of creation. Otherwise, the earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant (Isa 24:4-5). Those who destroy the Earth, themselves are destroyed.... The time has come ...projects the book of Revelation, for destroying those who destroy the earth. Rev.11:18. So the concept comes true, what we sow, we will reap (consequences)

3. **Intimacy, not Supremacy**

Sallie McFague presents a cosmology which pictures the world as God's body. Although the metaphor, of the world as God's body which is nothing new (Ramanuja had envisioned this model in India), credit goes to McFague for taking it up in a radical way in Christian theology. Here We understand, How God is intimately linked with the land.(Gen:2:19,20) Adam, in naming the created beings, wrongly understood that we are superiors. In that case when Hagar named God, it is purely a celebration of intimacy with God. In the same way, Adam named his partner, so it is also denotes the celebration of intimacy with his partner. So here intimacy is highlighted not supremacy.

According to Moltmann, God in himself is not a divine hierarchy, but a trinitarian community of persons, who relate to each other in a relationship of mutual indwelling (Perichoresis). God's own life therefore provides a pattern for the life of his creation as an intricate community of reciprocal relationships. Eco theology requires instead a participatory kind of knowledge, in which things are perceived in the totality of their relationships and the human subject perceives itself as a participant in the natural world. The purpose of such knowledge is not to dominate nature, but to restore the human sense of community with nature, respecting its independence and participating in mutual relationships with it.

4. **Dependent, Not Independent (Gen. 2:23)**

God created human beings as a dependent being, since he is taken out of the earth, so is naturally dependent on the earth and he has to take care of the earth. Tilling and guarding should be his vocation as God has commanded. If he really does it wholeheartedly, it is a pleasing aroma in the presence of God. The earth is the very stuff out of which we are made, and with which we are connected and interconnected for our being. At the same time it is also the land community, which includes not only soil, but also things like water, plants and every living thing on it. In addition, without this biotic community there can exist no human community. Neither can human community be isolated from this larger community or can it survive. Therefore, the land by itself is a special community, of which humanity is an integral part. For this reason, here, in general, the land is understood as a community of soil, water, plants and every being living in mutual relationship-an earth community.

5. **Kinship, Not Kingship (Gen. 2:7)**

Humankind is not created out of nothing but out of the earth, woman was created out of man's ribs (Gen. 21, 22), if we say that man is superior to woman, then it goes without saying that the earth is superior to man. So here it is not the question of who is superior, but it is a matter of partnership. Therefore, kinship is expected here not kingship. In Hos: 4:3, this verse envisages the new idea of both nature and human beings coming together by a new covenant. So there is end of war and in the final consummation, kinship is established instead of kingship. When the people of Israel aspired for the king to rule over them, God was displeased and said, they have rejected me as their king(I Sam:8:7).

God dwells in his creation means he makes his creation his own home, on earth as it is in heaven, and that all created beings experience the nearness of God on earth, and they find home and rest in God. Acknowledging Franz Rosenzweigs description of the doctrine of the Shekinah, Moltmann asserts that God gives himself away to the beings he has created, and suffers with their sufferings. Further on this concept he says, the God who in the Spirit dwells in his creation is present to every one of his creatures and remains bound to each of them, in joy and sorrow, which means that the Spirit who dwells in creation is also the one who suffers with creation, and this suffering is related to the passionate love of God for his creation. He states that the spirit is the power of love through which God creates and sustains the creation. Since, God is in absolute control of everything, we are not expected of rule over maintain kinship with all of the creation.
6. **God’s Concern, Our Concern**

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please... then you will find joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land...

As human beings and animals are to be given their times of Sabbath rest, their times for enjoying the fruits of God’s Creation — so also must the land be given its Sabbath rest. “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed” (Exodus 23:12).

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield: but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild beasts may eat. (Exodus 23:10-11). “You may ask, ‘what will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?’ God’s answer is ‘I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years’ (Lev 25:20). So do not worry, but practice this law to that your land will be fruitful. “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit (Lev 23:6).

There also is a warning. “...If you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, (Lev 26:14-15)...Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time it lies desolate... then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land have the rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you live in it. Lev 26:33-35. The rules and regulations given by God to the Israelites, reveal his concern and care for his creation. (Gen:2:2), In Deut:5:4, the Sabbath law is not only for human being and also it is extended to all creation. If this is the case, God’s concern should be our concern in treating the land and all in it.

7. **CONCLUSION**

To conclude:

1. There is no hierarchical structure but a new world order in which there will be equal partnership in the celebration of life on this earth.

2. Kinship and not kingship

3. Intimacy not supremacy

4. Taking care of the earth is our vocation

5. Mutual love, Partnership are the basic principle in taking care of the world

6. We are expected to bring a new world order according to the word of God expressed by Hosea and Isaiah.

7. Exploitation is against the will of God.

So our motto should be **“SOW GOOD AND REAP GOOD”**

Our aspiration should be **“GODS CONCERN IS OUR CONCERN”**

Our final concept should be **“KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT TRANSCENDENT BUT IMMANENT”**

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Deforestation – An Ecological Imbalance

Prasad Reddy Malla

If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you? You may destroy only the trees that you know do not produce food; you may cut them down for use in building siege-works against the town that makes war with you, until it falls. (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)

Introduction

With the development of modern industry and technology all over the world, the issue of ecological imbalance is the most imperative one. This problem has reached such an extent that it is practically impossible to resolve. Unfortunately we will not be able to recover, much of what has been destroyed.

Ecological imbalance between the natural factors and human activities is a socio-ecological crisis, which means that the balance between the environment and society is broken and this situation can lead to the destruction of humanity. The extent of the ecological imbalance may differ. Sometimes, nature itself can cope with the problem and can restore the balance. In the second degree of ecological imbalance, the biosphere loses its ability to repair itself and human intervention becomes necessary. In some cases it becomes most dangerous, called destruction, which is the limit after which it becomes impossible to restore the pristine condition of the ecosystem. This environmental disaster is caused by injudicious actions of man and his impermissible destruction of the natural environment. This disaster has already taken place in some parts of the globe.

The ecological issue in the biblical text

According to Deut. 20:19, 20, the Lord will save us but in this war let none engage whose hearts are fond of the world or afraid of the cross and the conflict. Here care is taken that in besieging cities the fruit trees should not be destroyed. God is a better friend to man than he is to himself and God’s law takes into account our interests and comforts while our own appetites and passions in which we indulge, are enemies to our welfare. Many of the divine precepts restrain us from destroying plans which are intended for our life and food. Every creation of God is good.

The tree of life is so called because its is a sign and seal of immortal life, and occupies a central position where it must have been an object of daily observation and interest, to constantly remind man of God, the creator.

Reasons

The reasons for ecological imbalance are associated with the increasing industrialisation, irrational waste of natural resources, deforestation, and water pollution –which ultimately causes ecological disaster by the exploitation of nature and creates trouble for mankind: hunger, lack of natural resources and destruction of the environment. Extensive deforestation leads to the disappearance of animals and birds, which upsets the ecological balance. In such a situation, if mankind does not take steps to restore destroyed crops and protect the endangered animals, it will eventually lead to the destruction of humanity. Ecological imbalance in the cities is the result of massive construction of buildings. A large number of vehicles and a lack of green spaces contribute to the accumulation of smog and carbon dioxide which adversely affects the health of the urban population. Industrial development has also led to an increase in harmful emissions into the atmosphere, which if unchecked may result in ecological disaster.
Today, in many places the environmental issues have greatly increased. Political leaders and environmental committees are much concerned about the changes occurring in nature and many manufacturers are attempting cleaner production, like the production of electric cars which are totally safe for the environment. Another issue that requires immediate attention is the recycling of wastes. Many countries are now seriously engaged in the disposal and recycling of human waste because it’s one of the ways to restore the balance between the natural world and society. Yet another serious issue causes ecological imbalance is deforestation which is amply illustrated with the following examples.

**Red sanders smugglers killed by police**

Red Sanders is a highly endangered species of tree also known as Red Sandalwood which is very expensive and greatly demand in China and Japan. It is grown mainly in Seshachalam hill ranges spread across Kadapa, Chittur and Kurnool in Rayalaseema region and parts of Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh. The death of M. Srinivas a 45 year old forest beat officer at Panuguru near Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh marks a dangerous escalation in the war against illegal felling and rampant smuggling of the rare natural treasure Red Sanders. What actually transpired after 2 am on July 12 near the Chintalapaleem forest cheek post on the Venkatagiri-Yerpedu road is still not known but it is apparent that he chased a vehicle, possibly a Sumo which was caught with the smugglers. They hammered him with an iron rod or wooden pole, left him bleeding and fled. It is for the first time in more than two decades that a forest department official was killed by Red Sanders smugglers in the state.

**Forest beat officer killed by smugglers**

Nine alleged red sandalwood smugglers were killed in one place and 11 in a second clash a kilometre away in Chittoor in Southern Andhra Pradesh. Deputy Inspector General M. Kantha Rao said his officers had opened fire “in self-defence” after they were attacked in the thick forests with stones, axes and knives, about 570 kilometres south of Hyderabad. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered by the Chittoor District Collector.

**Harith haram to make entire Telangana state green**

The Telangana Government has launched a new project “HARITHA HARAM” to make the entire Telangana green. Telangana government has decided to launch a massive tree planting programme to bring entire Telangana under the green cover in the next three years. It is estimated that the entire state requires 230 crore saplings to bring 33 per cent of the area under green cover. National Forest Policy envisages to have a minimum of 33% of the total geographical area under forest/tree cover to maintain environmental stability and ecological balance which are vital for the sustenance of all life-forms, human, animal and plants. In the Telangana state forest area is 25.16% of the total geographical area. Telangana state Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao launched “TELANGANA KU HARITHA HARAM” (green garland to Telangana) on 03-07-2015 by planting a sapling at Chilkur village near Hyderabad and called upon people to actively participate in the programme to improve the green cover for a better future.

“The State Government will supply the saplings but it’s not a government programme. Don’t wait for a Minister, MP, or MLA. It’s your programme. It’s the responsibility of each one of us to plant trees in open spaces,” he said. The programme would continue for four years and as many as 40 lakhs saplings will be planted in each assembly constituency and in every village 40,000 saplings will be planted annually.

For the success of Haritha Haram all officials, social workers and NGOs should work together. In the forest area, activities like Forest Protection, Forestation, and Rejuvenating degraded forests should be taken up.

The object of the programme is to improve the green cover and maintain ecological balance and to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

**Certain Reflections of the plant kingdom**

Felling the bark of the trees (Mango, Eucalyptus and Neem) and reflecting on the following questions. Its beginning, its growth and its usefulness.

**Mango tree**

“I don’t eat my own fruits, but you...”, when you throw a stone at me, I don’t entertain any ill feelings against you, but I give you mangoes”. Life is to be lived for others. Forgiveness is the root of all blessings on earth.
Eucalyptus tree
“Tiger, you are my refuge. Come and rest under my shade. The forests have lions and tigers! They are the guardians of the eco-systems in the forests. They are the real protectors of the plants and other animals.

Neem tree
I have a long period of life. I don’t usually get old and fall. I always carry a price. My leaves are really medicines. I make your blood pure. My usefulness is realized only when I am absent.

ECOLOGICAL EXHORTATION
‘The whole world is one nest’
‘We are the birds of the same nest
We may wear different skins,
We may speak in different languages,
We may belongs to different cultures,
Yet we share the same home-our Earth
Born on the same planet
Covered by the same skies
Gazing at the same stars
Breathing the same air,
We must learn to happily progress together,
Or miserably perish together,
For man/woman can only live individually,
But can only survive collectively.

God – giver of freedom
As it has been seen in the story of Adam and Eve our God is a God of Freedom. God could have protected the ‘Forbidden tree’ in the Garden of Eden with barbed wire or could not have created the tree at all in the first place. But still we see that God did not hesitate to leave the tree unprotected. God grants humans freedom because it is only in full freedom we can love God. Freedom has its obvious challenges and not always do human beings use freedom for the best purposes. This freedom also allows us to use our bodies and minds in a creative manner.

Conclusion
Almighty God is the creator of this cosmos, but we have misused the gift of our creation and we have become plunderers and exploiters refusing to listen to the groans of wounded creations. In the name of science, technology, development and our consumerist life style, we have hacked the limbs of mother earth by cutting trees, trampling the nests of small birds, to decorate our living room with sofas and expensive wooden furniture. We have killed the rare species of animals to wear fur coats and make carpets of their skin and jewels of their bones and trunks. We have suppressed the rhythm of the rippling river by building dams.

We have sucked the water of the womb of mother earth by boring tube wells and return injecting toxic and nuclear wastes in the nerves of mother earth which are the rivers and the seas. We have polluted air, water and environment and made our Mother Earth sick. The floods, earthquakes, famines are the sign of her sickness, but yet we sprinkle salt in the wounds of mother earth by plundering and polluting her more and more every day. We think ourselves to be masters of this earth living the right to subdue, exploit and deplete all her resources and tend to forget that the mother earth nurtures and nourishes us. Her death and destruction will be the inevitable cause of our death. We have forgotten that God has entrusted us with the responsibility to take care of his planet, and the well being of all the creatures.

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Agrarian Democracy

Irwin Arthur Jesudoss

Introduction

Jesus the ‘green prophet’ proclaims, his earthly ministry in rhythm and harmony with the vast nature around. Starting from his birth (manger), baptism (river Jordan), temptations (desert), first miracle (water to wine), last supper (gifts of creations bread and wine), death (wooden cross on a hill), and resurrection (breaking the tomb cut in a rock) clearly illustrate the intimate relationship of Jesus with creation. In trying to understand the importance, value, purpose and worth of nature and all creations let us focus on the gospel (Luke 8:4-15).

The writer of the gospel, according to Michael Trainor “is most prolific of the earliest Christian – an author whose geographical interest is enormous”. He focuses on the land that surrounds the Mediterranean sea and captures their life and culture. Luke’s audience were non – Jews mostly peasants, social elite and artisans. His context was God of the universe and a perfect human saviour. The focus on the humanness of God spikes the relationship of the divine with earth very much and proves the oneness and life of God within nature. He focuses on Gentiles and improvises the care and concern of God to the needy and the outcast. This feature helps to focus on Jesus’ life related with nature, where all his parables capture the real life examples and socio cultural factors of human life. Pondering on Jesus’ “parable of four soils” let us try to enlighten ourselves on soil, seed, farmer and their relevance in our contemporary quest for eco justice.

Soil: Life in abundance

Soils are of different types with different minerals and organic matter that have life. The plant life is dependent on a fragile and thin layer of top soil, but due to deforestation and desertification and other poor agricultural practices, there is an increase in soil erosion. It is not just a physical property but source of all life where soil and society, earth and its people are intimately interconnected. In the tribal and peasant societies, cultural and religious identity are derived from the soil. “Soil is our goddess, it is our religion” are the words of an adivasi woman; so it is not only a womb of reproduction of biological life but also cultural and spiritual life. Even today soils express the sentiment and emotions of many villages as it is very much in the life of the people. In the name of development this bond between people and the soil is highly disturbed and has been changed from sacred mother to a commodity.

The creation story in Genesis (2:7) states that God created man from the “dust of the ground” (the Tamil version clearly states sand – soil) in his own image and breathed life into it. The power of God’s breath brings life into this lifeless shell. Thus soil from creation receives and carries the life giving minerals and valuable chemicals of the soil are great gifts of nature without which the greenness cannot be achieved, yet humans disrespect soil and forget that in the end we return to the soil. As Mercy Kappan explains that the internal bond of earth and human can be understood through death as ‘the final resting-in—peace of humans on the lap of mother earth—vehicle of grace’. Let’s learn to respect and protect our mother earth in this journey.

Here in this text four types of soil are highlighted – path, rocky soil, ground of thorns and good soil. In understanding the Galilean practice of agriculture, the farmer uses the acceptable method of sowing seed by hand, tossing it by the handful as he walks through the field. This is a local practice of sowing seeds which is familiar to all the people who had gathered to hear Jesus. So Jesus using this native method of agriculture in his parable reflects his respect and acceptance of native (Local) practices
in farming instead of alien methods of farming. But today in our present context, Indian agriculture has undergone a vast transmission towards commercial farming, chemical farming and other alien types which kills the richness and value of the mother soil. Enormous productivity, mono crops etc. have disturbed the natural way of agriculture.

In further understanding the four types of soil, the path – common ground in Palestine was split into long narrow strips and between these strips were pathways. And where seed falls on the path (verse 5) there is no way of getting into the soil but either be stamped or eaten by birds. This practice also helps the cycle of nature as birds feed on the seeds for their life. This cycle not only considers growth of plants but at the same time the life of other living things is also fulfilled. This concept of interdependence always prevails in native and indigenous way of farming, but the commercial farming focuses only on enormous productivity and affects the regular and natural livelihood.

Vadana Shiva (social activist) expresses in her book “The Violence of Green Revolution”. Experts from America came to India to change the Indian agricultural research and policies from an indigenous and ecological model to an alien and high-tech model. This practice of the western model may result in high number but the basic and fundamental concepts of care, interdependence and livelihood are highly violated. Life is not all about productivity and profit but it is giving, sharing and caring for all creatures as the farmers hand let some seeds to fall on the walking paths for the birds of the earth to feed.

The rocky area (verse 6) is not ground full of stones but ground with a thin layer of soil over a limestone rock, which has its own value and usefulness in the natural cycle. Though this particular landscape is not suitable for regular farming, it fulfil its purpose in other ways. And ground of thorns and wild grass (verse 7) exposes that nature is of different types and each plants grow in different soil, geographical condition and in different atmosphere that suits them. And this biodiversity enriches the beauty and values of nature. This doesn't mean that all thorns and wild grass are to be cleared for the growth of good crops but each has its own value and purpose of creation. This resembles the concept of monocultural in crops where a particular crop is promoted heavily and all other crops and plants are avoided, like cash crops in place of indigenous seed varieties which deeply affect the biodiversity of our nation. It is also clear that each plant has its own geographical area for survival but humans out of their selfish motives and profits have tried and planted trees of the western nation into local areas which disturbs the cycle of nature. Verse 7 also portrays that seeds falling in between thorny plants affects the growth of crops and was choked by the thorny plants as the seed doesn’t bear the character of growing in this particular soil or geographical area. So God has created each with its own purpose and reason and shouldn't be disturbed and changed for selfish motives.

Verse 8 says seed that fell on good soil came up, yielded crop of hundred times more than was sown, this happens when proper seed planted in proper soil and not by any artificial method imposed on farming. Nature shouldn’t be disturbed for our own benefit rather we should learn to live with and along nature and its values.

Seed - Life through sacrifice

Seed carries life, it has the greatest ability of producing a new plant (Life) this happens only when the seed dies, it has to destroy its nature or sacrifice its own structure, mix and mingle with soil, water and other organic matter to produce and reproduce a new fruitful plant. Thus it sacrifices its life for new life. It’s the practice of Indian farmers where they separate healthy seeds, best breeds for farming and never use those seeds for other purposes even as food. But this system has changed or considered valueless due to commercial farming where seeds are owned by multinationals and powerful elites with patent right for the seeds. This challenges the life of farmers and agriculture to great extent.

In the text (verse 8) seed that fell in good soil gives its harvest in hundreds and thousands which portrays the character of good soil where the seed can give its full result only in a well conditioned soil. So protection of soil and its minerals is visualized here and due to technological development in agriculture, continuous use of soil is in practice and has led to low quality of soil, deforestation and desertification of fertile land. Jesus quotes in Mathew (13:31-32) where he compares a small mustard seed to the kingdom of God. This mustard seed grows into a big plant with branches where all the birds of earth takes shelter and uses its branches for living. Thus life of a seed is so purposeful and carries its own worth, likewise Christian discipleship requires the nature of seed where self
sacrifice for the growth of new life and newness should be a part of our faith journey. This happens in the process of breaking our self, mingling with co-creations, restructuring our attitudes towards life and reproducing good spiritual fruits.

Farmer-Life as co-worker

The agriculture minister of Haryana Om Prakash Dhankar made a comment that “farmers who commit suicide are coward and criminals” such egregious insensitivity to the pains and struggle of farmers is the harsh reality in our country. Farmer is the life-blood of our nation, who works in the sun and shower, ploughs the land, sows the seed and take care of the cattle, thus he is the co-worker of God’s creation. In recent years suicide of Indian farmers has increased due to debts and unsuitable agriculture practices. From the text we know that Jesus uses the work of the farmer to enlighten the crowd on the importance of the word of God that leads to salvation. Jesus should have known the entire life style and practice of a farmer as his words clearly defines the nature and practice of agricultural method. This proves the relationship and knowledge of Jesus with soil, seed, rock, plants, birds, farmer and quality of production that he entirely uses the nature and its components in his ministry safely carrying its value and purpose. He proves his control and ownership on nature through teaching people the values of life (do’s and don’ts) from the activities or law of nature. In (Mathew 10:16) Jesus wants his disciples to learn innocence from the dove and shrewdness from snakes while encountering challenges and persecutions in ministry. And from (ch 6:26-28) Jesus teaches us not to worry for food and clothes as the birds and flowers are provided for by God and thus we too receive his blessings. Thus nature has the ability to teach and enlighten mankind with moral and ethical values. Our concern and responsibility of the church has been seriously challenged.

Conclusion

Earth is not meant for human beings alone but for all creatures, our relation with earth should not be with an EGO status where man has dominion over other creatures, but we are to be related in ECO status where we become one among the creations in sharing the life of the earth. The Scriptures clearly depict the interconnectedness between God and nature and we don’t have any right to exploit or break this relationship with all our technology and development rather try to adopt the norms and values of nature in our daily life. Human tendency always gains superiority with the demise of other beings, without realizing the uniqueness and purpose of its presence, thus today humanity has extended its domain over nature and exploited all components of earth like soil, water, air, trees, seeds, animals and etc forgetting the resistance of nature. As a Christian community let us be informed about the various ecological issues that affect us and our future generations and try to exercise various steps and strategies to reduce our consumption and learning to live with the law of nature. The text has clearly enlightened us about the need, value, and purpose of all the creations of God, nothing can be considered insignificant on this earth as everything is strongly interconnected and inter dependent for a healthier and safe life. Let us be confronted as a Christian community and church as a whole to raise our voice against injustice on earth and participate as transforming agents towards integrity of earth and its creation.

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Appendix - 1

Life Giving Agriculture with Reference to Church of South India

Shuba Keerthana

Introduction

The Church always tends to claim itself to be a called out community. But the church, as an instrument to carry out God's mission in this world has a major role to play in responding to the current ecological issues. The paper focuses on the status of Indian agriculture in the context of globalization and climate change, and the effective roles played by the Church of South India in taking various initiatives concerning agriculture and its impact on the churches to trigger them to be sensitive to the ecological problems and work for the goodness of creation.

Indian agriculture in the context of globalization

The agricultural sector is a mainstay of the rural Indian economy, around which socio-economic privileges and deprivations of our country revolve. Any change in its structure would adversely impact on the existing patterns of social equity. Globalization policies have created various challenges for agriculture in India and other developing countries. The consequence of which has exposed the life-giving native agriculture to exploitative international competition. This has caused a drastic change in food habits, life style and resultant neglect of agriculture on which people's livelihood depends. The marginal farmers are pressurized to shift their mode of production to cultivate cash crops, thereby commercializing the agriculture. Globalization has caused a disintegration of the rural economy which in turn has led to the disintegration of the village community, their socio-economic and cultural aspects. Thereby people adapted to modern trends in the agriculture where most of the food crops were converted into cash crops; farmers producing these cash crops were controlled by the Giant corporate sectors and MNCs like Monsanto through their terminated seeds, equipments, chemicals and synthetic fertilizers. As a result from the shift from food crops to export crops, the prices of the food items went up, the poor people adversely affected thus deepening the gap between the rich and the poor. Besides the agricultural lands were also converted into plantations in the name of “ecologically sustaining rapid economic growth.” Farmers were no longer the primary and autonomous producers.

The reduction of labour force compelled the poor farmers to wander from place to place for their survival. Therefore globalization adversely affected the vulnerable class of rural society in their employment, income, consumption patterns, their education and health status and it functions as a new mechanism to take away the living resources and biodiversity from the people.

Industrialization is one of the major threatening factors contributing towards agricultural crisis in India. Under the banner of the ‘so called economic development’ agricultural lands were converted into factories and industries which consequently leads to deforestation, environmental degradation, heavy pollution of natural resources, loss of agricultural land, alienating the inhabitants of the land by displacing them from their own place of living.

Overpopulation in India is also the other significant factor which exerts its pressure over the agricultural sectors forcing the farmers to produce more yields within less period of time. So the farmers had to opt for the short cut techniques, using chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds this ultimately leads to the decline in the crop yield, farmer’s suicide, genetic disorders, malnutrition and death.

Tourism developmental projects in hilly areas and coastal areas in India which occupies a wide range of land causes environmental degradation like landslides soil erosion, pollution and, it often displaces farming.
Severe changes in the Climate happened in the recent years and global warming, also upsets the agriculture and farming practices due to unpredictable monsoon, unusual distribution of rainfall, severe droughts and floods thereby making our farmers as climate refugees of our times. Problems of climate change are experienced daily by the people especially those at the periphery. With reference to climate change, Archbishop Desmond Tutu states that “the poor, the vulnerable and the hungry are exposed to the harsh edge of climate change every day of their lives. When the rains don’t come, the crops fail and the families go hungry. Or when they do arrive, the rains more and more frequently cause floods that literally wash away peoples’ homes and livelihoods. Rain or drought, the result is the same: more hunger and more misery for millions of people living on the very margins of global society. Where water is scarce and populations are growing, conflict is never going far behind.”

Climate injustice is also related with caste and patriarchy where traditionally women are said to have close relationship with the land, such as planting the saplings, watering, removing of weeds, harvesting the crops, women play a very significant role in agriculture. When such lands are affected due to climatic variation, women are at high risk of facing unfavorable situations because of gender discriminations and gender roles. On the other hand when it comes to caste, the Upper caste farmers with the notion of making money using chemicals, hybrid seedlings have commoditized the land contributing towards climate crisis. But unfortunately, the victims are the Dalits, Tribals and the poor farmers.

Christian Initiatives in Agriculture with reference to Church of south India

Christian churches always have a tendency to be distinct in its spirituality. Our distinctiveness in spirituality is usually challenged by the other religious, secular organizations and several other factors. In primitive Christianity, although has greatly contributed to the development of science, hesitated to accept the scientific truth, thinking that would be against the faith. Christianity is usually thought to be problematic than friendly towards Ecology, Only in the recent years many Christian thinkers, scientists, Christian churches and church based institutions became aware of the ecological issues, and felt the need to be concerned about our own environment. According to Freda Rajotte, “If planet earth is sick, then the church is part of the illness.” The Church has a major role to reveal its uniqueness through eco-friendly lifestyle, eco spirituality, simplicity and willingness to join hands with others in conserving God’s creation.

Response from the ecumenical spheres

Having felt the need to address these serious issues, different churches like the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, reformed Lutherans and evangelicals along with the World Council of Churches responded to the ecological problems. The responses were both massive and ambiguous. How do we move forward? Who will be at the cutting edge of the struggle? Who will initiate? Does the Church have any significant role or special moral responsibility in it?

Although Christians have been, very slow in grasping and in responding to environmental concerns, two international initiatives in particular have greatly helped to boost awareness among them. They are (WCC) ‘Justice peace and integrity of creation’ (JPIC) along with the UN efforts and the World Wide Fund for Nature’s Network on Religion and Conservation. Despite various criticism in WCC’s approach, many initiatives took place by the churches globally. Some met with failures and some succeeded. They began to discuss the earth subduing model to earth caring model and discussed on Faith science and technology, then they started discussing Ecology and social justice and later touched the issues like Greenhouse emissions, Global warming etc

Agricultural Initiatives and its engagement in the Church of South India

Church of South India CSI was also influenced by the WCC’s initiative. In 1992, the Ecological Committee was constituted by the then Moderator of CSI, Most Rev. Ryder Devapriyam. The Church of South India recognizes that God’s mission has various dimensions. The Constitution of CSI clearly specifies that the mission of the Church as 1) Proclamation of Gospel 2) Nurturing the people of God 3) Service 4) Establish Justice in society 5) Stewardship of creation.

The Mission Statement of the Ecological Concern’s Committee affirms the Commitment of CSI in establishing social and Ecological justice. As per the constitution, “The church seeks to create awareness among the people about environmental and ecological concerns and thereby to care
for God’s creation. It endeavors to encourage people to refrain from abuse of nature’s resources and to strive to keep the earth a habitable place for the present as well as for the future generations.”

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC) have honored the ecological contributions and long-term commitment of the CSI in protecting the life on this planet through an award given on 3rd December 2009. This event marked one of the historic moments in the life of the CSI. The CSI Synod Ecological Concerns Committee has been publishing books on themes relating to eco-theology in order to educate and sensitize congregations on this very serious issue. Awards such as ‘Green Diocese’, ‘Green Parish’, ‘Green institution’ have been constituted to motivate Dioceses, parishes and institutions towards this end.11

Theological Initiatives of CSI

The Oikos News bulletin has evolved to document the ecological work of the Dioceses and it is our sincere hope that it will encourage Dioceses to share interactions, events, projects and work relating to ecology and the environment. Through these efforts the CSI calls for continued awareness building and theological reflection among the congregation on a new cosmological vision of life and eco-justice through study and action, and through the production and dissemination of relevant theological and Bible study materials.12 CSI has moved from the ‘stewardship’ model to the ‘partnership’ model since the former is a hierarchical model that promotes dominion or domination the latter model emphasizes on Mutuality.13

The CSI Department of Ecumenical Relations and Ecological Concerns (CSI DEREC) which was started in the year 2011, works in partnership with the Commission on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) in conducting workshops, seminars and consultation programmes to promote the theological affirmation that respects the integrity and mutuality among the creation, in continuity with the likeminded effort in the ecumenical circles. It is an effort to foster a ‘Pan-en-theistic ecology’ (god of all creations) rather than ‘Pantheistic ecology’ (all creation as God). CSI in partnership with The Board of Theological Education in Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC), United theological college and World Alliance of Christian Communication NCCI and WCC worked together and brought out several theological resource books, bible study materials and E-News bulletin titled Green Pulse.14

CSI’s Commitment towards Eco Justice

CSI DEREC had initiated training Eco-Missionaries to promote the concept of Green Congregation, encouraging them to work towards Eco Justice. CSI believes that the church should engage in the struggles of people in the Protection of God’s creation. CSI equips the church to formulate an Eco-theology which respects the cries and voices of victims/survivors. In connection with this CSI had released few statements, in solidarity with thousands in Orissa agitating against POSCO, September 2, 2011., communiqué to the Churches to promote ‘Climate Justice and few others as well in addition to it CSI also participated in Anti POSCO movement by initiating a signature campaign, protesting against the disastrous effects that would occur in the villages in Jagatsingnagar district in Orissa and CSI also extended its solidarity with Nuke- Not India Campaign in Koodangulam.

CSI also launched campaigns like ‘Plant a life’ campaign with the intention of preserving Biodiversity and ‘food for life’ campaign.15

CSI has taken several initiatives to conserve the environment by actively responding to various ecological issues, mobilizing the churches at various levels to sustain a harmonious eco friendly living. But critical evaluation is also necessary to know how effectively it is in progress in reaching out to the grass root levels.

Life giving Agricultural experiences in South Indian Churches at the grass root level

Churches, church based institutions and theological seminaries have made considerable attempts even in the field of agriculture. With few significant initiatives from theological colleges, and churches let us understand their involvement in promoting the life giving agriculture.

a. Rural Theological Institute (RTI):

RTI is a unit of Tamilnadu Theological seminary TTS in Madurai, this is a significant agricultural unit which is known to provide theological
education through involvement with the problems of farmers, Dalits, poor, women and children of the surrounding villages. IN 1974 TTS bought a cultivable land of 25 acres in a drought-stricken area near Madurai airport. Formally RTI was started in 1979 by Dr. Samuel Amirtham, this was earlier called as Rural Development institute which intended to develop education in villages and developed into Rural Theological Institute providing an exposure for the seminarians to rural and agrarian life, it motivated the students to get involved in rural development. Non formal education, health centers, nursery schools, adult education, self help schemes are some of the agendas which helped in establishing the RTI. Students spend a year or a term in a village setup living and working with the local people learning from the villagers under the guidance of a guru. In the first year students undergo agricultural exposure and cultural exposures learning various indigenous arts of liberation like songs street theatre, drama, dances like Parai, kazhiyal garagam, oyil etc. Students who are directly involved in the villages worked on a particular socio-economic issue related to development and theologically reflected on it. In RTI students assisted the farm workers with their manual labour in vegetable cultivation. Those villagers were primarily jasmine cultivators, who were exploited by the rich people and the mediators; such poor farmers were sensitized through meetings and workshop in RTI and empowered to be self dependent. It is good experience for the students to learn about the value of life giving agriculture. RTI followed different approaches in its involvement like, charity and welfare, Community Development, Issue based struggles, eco-issues and self reliance. Some of its ecological involvements are-it encouraged the farmers to use the waste lands for in growing trees, and in adopting drip irrigation, people were motivated to dig percolation tanks, it installed 25 biogas plants with the help of Government subsidy and bank loan, small Herbal gardens were started with 150 medicinal plants. Organic farming was done using natural fertilizers like manure and leaf wastes. Farmers abolished mono cropping by implementing crop rotation, RTI gradually turned into a seedling bank and training centre for compost pit, vermiculture, natural pest control etc. the whole idea was to promote a self sufficient village farming. But today people and the institute has been threatened by industrialization to displace or even destroy RTI for the sake of airport road extension. Similarly in CSI Karnataka Southern Diocese there is a center called Rural Theological Training Centre which is functioning with the same motive, orienting the theological students to agricultural exposures.

b. Ecological Concern’s Committee in Madhya Kerala Diocese

Congregations are actively involved in the ecological activities. Various ecological activities are organized like consultation for eco-leaders, regional and zonal seminars on different kinds of farming. Ecology Sunday is celebrated. The Diocese conducts an ecological convention in association with the diocesan schools and institutions. It encourages the congregation with ‘Green awards’ under different eco friendly constructed categories like Green Church, Green Institution, Green home, Green farmer etc. Various agricultural initiatives like planting tree saplings, distribution of vegetable seeds, digging percolation pits, seminars, debates, rallies and other awareness programmes are also carried out. Diocese owns 40 acres of land for paddy cultivation. In many church premises tapioca is cultivated.

c. ‘Give a cow’ programme

Rayalseema Diocese of Andhra Pradesh, in association with Mission Partnership India, launched a project in Madhanapalli and Aroghyavaram called ‘Give a cow’ programme with the intention that poor farmers’ families are benefited with milk and dung for the agricultural fields. In Krishna Godhavari Diocese, vegetables and spinach are cultivated in the church premises.

d. Ecological Interest Groups

In theological colleges, especially in TTS. Ecological interest groups are created students are encouraged to involve in manual labour, to separate bio and non bio degradable waste by placing two different waste bins of different colour, to deepen the percolation tanks, to Plant fruit-bearing saplings, maintain herbal gardens with medicinal plants, invite the nearby school and college students and create awareness through competitions like Drawing, painting, skit, mime, debates, essays and choreography.

Some of the general ecological activities which are carried out in Churches, Diocesan Institutions and theological institutions are:

1. Encourage the congregations and the institutions to plant trees on the campuses.
2. Organizing regional Eco –conventions.

3. Organizing Eco- clubs in Diocesan schools, colleges and congregations, educating the members of youth, men and women's fellowship of the congregation on eco related issues.

4. Organizing Farmers’ fellowship.

5. Creating plastic free zones/ parishes.

6. Observing ecological Sunday on the Sunday following the World Environmental Day for which special liturgies are prepared in English and four regional languages and are used by all the CSI churches .Earth Bible sermons based on different eco related themes will be reflected.

Possible Agro friendly approaches towards agriculture are

Natural forms of agricultural techniques (Organic farming): The Modern agricultural practices are making the land sick by poisoning them with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This consequently pollutes the soil and the underground water, the soil loses its fertility destroying the nitrogen fixing bacteria resulting in the loss of crop production.

Agricultural lands are very much in contact with people but whenever the gap occurs between the people and land and when it is widened; usually the land suffers the most. Prof. Solomon Victus rightly says the importance of agricultural land is understood only when we go out into the desert land”. Only the people who properly know the significance of the land can be able to protect the flora and fauna of the land. So it is important in schools, Sunday schools and colleges to incorporate in the syllabus on the relationship between the human beings and the land . Life sustaining traditional agricultural technique like mixed cropping, crop rotation, intercropping, mulching etc need to be put into practice in order to conserve the soil nutrients and increase crop production.

Preparing natural fertilizers by very simple methods, like compost manure, through vermiculture, and through kitchen wastes can be done. The Church should also work towards encouraging its congregation to at least learn to produce simple kitchen gardens in their houses and church premises. Impart the benefits of using organic food products to live a healthy life free from cancerous and genetic disorders.21

Promoting Localized Market: In Tamil it is called Ulloor sandhai . Churches should take an initiative to mobilize the people to introduce localized markets in the places where there are such markets, and help in increasing the village economy of that particular land. The only possible way to circulate the money obtained from the villages through the food grains and the vegetables can be achieved by promoting localized markets which can also the avoid outsiders goods, the surplus good’s can be sold outside. The producer’s (poor farmers) hard work is also respected.

Counter culture and lifestyle: In today’s world we are greatly influenced by the globalization and are much attracted towards using foreign goods and modern techniques and willfully adapt the foreign cultures, but we fail to realize that we are risking ourselves at our own peril suffering economic crisis and causing ecological dangers. The culture of consumerism is the other major reason for the crisis in Indian agriculture. In the consumeristic society, the greed to posses and consume, have made human beings to intervene with the life giving land with the exploitative attitude. This kind of our culture has blind folded us by preventing us to take any effort to promote a sustainable community of all life on the sustainable earth. The Church has a role to play in identifying the dominant cultures like caste, patriarchy, language, fundamentalism... and make attempts to create awareness among the people to uproot them and create an alternative new culture. People should be encouraged to respect the indigenous culture and arts, indigenous goods and made aware of the direct benefits we get from nature. Simultaneously, simple eco friendly life style like using solar powers, responsible usage of electricity and water, respecting manual labour of the farmers,which are not something new for us to follow but the natural way of living that we have ignored and forgotten.

Waste management: It is very important to repent from our “use and throw” culture and life style as it enables us to produce and dump huge mounds of wastes like plastics, nuclear waste and electronic waste. People should be encouraged to segregate the bio and non biodegradable waste, and recycle them accordingly, Using recycled plastic and long term durable plastics, avoid using disposable plastics in church events. These disposable plastics take long time to degrade thereby it affects the fertility of the land, when cattle feed on them they die. Earth has a powerful ability not only to give life but also to recycle the biodegradable wastes but when we
dump the non biodegradable chemicals and plastics; it struggles to execute its power to recycle and regenerate. Churches can tie up with other organizations and the websites (e.g. paper man) which works towards waste management. So, simple and natural way of living can help to sustain and enhance good qualitative life on earth.23

Critical – Theological Evaluation
The Church has taken a very long time to sense the need for the concerns towards ecological issues due to the acceptance of the imported, dominant theologies in the past. So the faith was also structured with the western theology as a base. The impact of this was so deeply rooted even till today as influencing the worship, liturgy, music, church structures, life style etc creating a drastic change in culture, distorting the Indigenous nature in them. Though various attempts were made by Indian Christian theologians to indigenize those dominant ideologies it was not able to succeed completely as it is influenced by brahminic ideologies.

M.M. Thomas in his last days felt that the church’s prophetic mission should be stand by the people when they struggle for an economy that gives priority to Eco-justice and social justice rather than economic growth through transnational high technology. Today eco-justice must be brought into the goals of the economy24. But the church is not bold enough or willing to undergo a change in itself. For CSI to travel effectively towards the level of implementation, a structural change is needed in one s own perception, lifestyle, faith or else these initiatives would turn out to be blunt.

Conclusion
Various efforts taken by the CSI has created a great impact in the churches and the institutions, motivating them to engage in ecological activities. Critically evaluating these initiatives, although several attempts were made to address the ecological issues, its regretting on our part that implementation in the field of Agriculture in specific are limited, the Church of South India has made great efforts in stimulating our concerns towards Agriculture, and struggling in taking forward those initiatives to the level of implementation at the church level. Few ecologically-sensitive pioneers have made very serious attempts in the past. But due to improper succession in the leadership, impact of globalization, encroachment for the sake of the so called development, influence of modern agricultural techniques they are greatly threatened. Secular, other faith and Non Governmental organizations are also engaging in addressing these issues at different levels. The Church should come forward to dialogue with them and associate with those organizations to effective work together towards healing the agricultural land which is enslaved and suffering due the disastrous intervention of human beings. The Church has the prophetic mission to liberate the land and the people of land from the control of the exploiting powers and enable them to reveal their quality of giving life in its fullness.

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Appendix - 2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reconciling with Nature (English, Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada) 2002</td>
<td>A Guide to a Green Church. Published by CSI SECC. Edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad</td>
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<td>God is Green 2004)</td>
<td>Ecological concerns and work of CSI Synod and Dioceses. Published by CSI SECC. Edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad</td>
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<td>Eco Vision and Mission (English and Tamil)2006</td>
<td>A guide to Sunday School teachers, Contributors: Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad, Ms. Jessy Jeyakaran, Dr. Edwin Chandrasekharan, Published by CSI SECC</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis (2009)</td>
<td>Edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad and Rt. Rev. Thomas Samuel. Published jointly by CSI SECC and CSS</td>
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<td>Edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad and Rt. Rev. Thomas Samuel. Published jointly by CSI SECC and CSS</td>
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<td>Forest: Our Good Neighbour (2011)</td>
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21 Oikos, news bulletin (January – June 2014), 5-22.
22 Solomon Victus, *the Rainbow* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), 140,141.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Turn to God: Turn to Green (2012)</td>
<td>A Worship Resource Book on ‘Green Energy’, Published by CSI DEREC</td>
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<td>Bread of Life: Bread for Life (2013)</td>
<td>A Worship Resource Book on ‘Food Justice’, Published by CSI DEREC</td>
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<td>Word &amp; World (2013)</td>
<td>Bible Studies on Climate Justice Published by CSI &amp; BTESSC, Edited by Viji Varghese Eapen &amp; Mohan Larbeer</td>
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<td>Renewed Faith for a Redeemed Earth (2014)</td>
<td>Eco-Theological Reflections, Published by CSI, UTC &amp; CSS, Edited by Viji Varghese Eapen &amp; Allan Samuel Palanna</td>
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<td>Green Church (2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earth Bible Sermons 1 (2015)</td>
<td>Ecological sermons Published jointly by ISPCK and CSI, Edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad</td>
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