

Anthropocentrism in Christian eco-theology: origin and debate

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Abstract

This article explores the origins of anthropocentrism in Christian eco-theology, a concept mainly introduced by Lynn White (1907-1987). It also examines the subsequent debates, especially from the perspective of theocentrism, which opposes the Anthropocentric model. Content analysis is used to understand the language and social functions of anthropocentrism and Christian eco-theology in academic literature while also examining the key arguments related to the topic. Meanwhile, discourse analysis is employed to reinforce the findings. The study concludes that Lynn White's work, *The Historical Roots*, initiated further contemporary debate on Christian eco-theology. As experts claimed, the error committed by White may have caused tremendous damage to the Christian tradition. However, it also enriched subsequent inquiries into the development of Christian eco-theology. Moreover, the anthropocentric framework in Christian eco-theology was also partly a result of misinterpreting Genesis 1:27,

which is closely related to the various interpretations of *Imago Dei* (image of God). Theocentrism, as such, possibly occupies a central position in present-day apologetics regarding eco-theology in Christianity, providing further opportunities for discussion in defending Christ's relevance to the recent environmental crisis.

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menelusuri asal-usul Antroposentrisme dalam Ekoteologi Kristen, sebuah konsep yang diperkenalkan utamanya oleh Lynn White (1907-1987). Artikel ini juga meninjau perdebatan yang muncul setelahnya, khususnya dari perspektif Teosentrisme yang menolak model Antroposentris. Analisis konten digunakan untuk memahami penggunaan bahasa dan fungsi sosial dari Antroposentrisme dan Ekoteologi Kristen dalam literatur akademik, serta memeriksa argumen kunci terkait topik tersebut. Sedangkan analisis wacana digunakan untuk memperkuat temuan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa karya Lynn White, *The Historical Roots*, memulai perdebatan kontemporer lebih lanjut tentang Ekoteologi Kristen. Seperti klaim para ahli, kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh White mungkin telah menyebabkan kerusakan besar pada tradisi Kristen. Namun, hal ini juga memperkaya penelitian selanjutnya tentang pengembangan Ekoteologi Kristen. Kerangka Antroposentris dalam Ekoteologi Kristen juga sebagian merupakan hasil dari kesalahpahaman terhadap Kejadian 1:27, yang kemudian erat kaitannya dengan berbagai interpretasi dari *Imago Dei*. Demikian pula dengan Teosentrisme, yang mungkin menempati posisi sentral dalam Apologetika saat ini terkait Ekoteologi dalam Kristen, memberikan kesempatan lebih lanjut untuk diskusi dalam mempertahankan relevansi Kristus terhadap krisis lingkungan terkini.

Keywords: *Anthropocentrism, Christianity, Eco-theology, Imago Dei, Theocentrism.*

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Introduction

In Judeo-Christian tradition, the prominent position of the descendants of Adam has been explained since the book of Genesis, possessing an essential role in ensuring the preservation of nature and also being responsible for

maintaining the natural wealth that God has provided for the survival of human life, regarding them the most superior creation occupies the privilege of being creatures that can apply their desires (Hansjürgens et al., 2018; Moo & Moo, 2018). As time passed, humankind tended to be arrogant and declared themselves as the center of the universe. The doctrine was well-known as anthropocentrism. Some experts and theologians debated that anthropocentrism is the very nature of Christianity; they claimed that God gave humans full authority to exploit nature to meet human needs.

Humans have the right to control nature and all its contents. Christianity is often associated with the emergence of Anthropocentrism based on the misinterpretation of the Holy Bible. In Genesis 1: 26-28, some theologians understand that God gave humans full authority to exploit nature to meet human needs. Humans can control nature and all its contents (Pal, 2022; Waters, 2021). Moreover, anthropocentrism also has a role that causes an environmental crisis because of its belief that human beings alone have a moral position and justify the individual to adopt ego-centric and selfish attitudes towards the world So that the world and its contents are the objects of human fulfillment only (Droz, 2022, p. 5).

As Deane-Drummond et al., (2015) claimed, the above interpretation is influenced by the development of Science and Technology and human power (Deane-Drummond et al., 2015). The result of science that is not based on religion has significant implications for changing the human worldview. So, the current problem is a hot debate about Christianity and the biblical text as triggers for the emergence of anthropocentrism; it influences humans to place themselves as the center of life, as seen from the actions of humans who prioritise their happiness, while others are only tools or objects to be exploited (Bassey, 2019, p. 162), similar to White's (1967) statement that Christianity bears an enormous burden in today's ecological problems because Christianity

is an anthropocentric religion that allows humans to exploit nature to support human needs (White, 1967, p. 3).

This article will discuss the current debate concerning relationships between anthropocentrism and the construction of eco-theology discourse through Christianity or Biblical perspectives. If we look closely at recent publications, anthropocentrism has dominated some portions of environmental topics within the Judeo-Christian belief system; as both Simkins (2014) and Hiebert (2019) argued, for example, that some conventional translations of Genesis portray the text in ways that are too anthropocentric, concealing the presence of the non-human other in the text, suppressing the non-human voice, and incorrectly elevating the non-human to the status of a human being (Hiebert, 2019; Simkins, 2014). While Luetz & Leo (2021) review the encounter from ecocentrism to the anthropocentric side of environmental challenge through epistemological analysis of 'Green Prisms' (Luetz & Leo, 2021), Lowe et al. (2021), accordingly conformed to an attempt to reconcile anthropocentric and eco/biocentric perspectives in environmental conservation, offering theocentrism as a conceptually sound and biblically consistent means of overcoming and resolving these opposing worldviews (Lowe et al., 2021). Ottuh (2020), on the other hand, mainly found that the current ecological problem necessitates the promotion of eco-spirituality, a kind of spirituality that favors a creation-centered viewpoint above an ego-centric way of living (Ottuh, 2020).

The issue concerning anthropocentrism related to environmental crisis is also available from various interdisciplinary contexts, including psychology (Fortuna et al., 2021) and video games (Ho et al., 2022). Petrescu-Mag et al., (2020), in addition, also emphasized one novel finding drawing attention to how religious beliefs and pro-environmental attitudes are affected by the legacy of the previous political administration; in their writing, Petrescu-Mag et al., (2020). The study's findings demonstrate how the Old Testament serves as the

cornerstone of the Judaic-Christian understanding of the land and ecology. This viewpoint might be considered as an ecological jewel that lends inherent worth to the natural world that can be easily extrapolated from the creation myth rather than as the source that fuels the anthropocentric attitude of dominion and abuse of creation, as some have suggested within chapter *Genesis* of Hebrew Bible (Petrescu-Mag., 2020).

Those literature reviews seem to encourage proper research about anthropocentrism in Christian Eco-Theology, aiming to profound and balance comparative discourse related to how anthropocentrism should be considered an essential part of constructing Christian Eco-Theology. Recent developments regarding the issue are also crucial to comprehend, realising the position of religion nowadays among ecological matters. In order to aim at answering an intended purpose, this paper will employ the content analysis method, which will describe the nature of the idea within the available text. It will be helpful as a covert strategy that enables researchers to organise and synthesise massive amounts of material to give insightful historical and cultural context for research on the topic of anthropocentrism and eco-theology. It will initiate via choosing texts, unitizing message units, creating content categories, categorising the text, and presenting the findings (Badzinski et al., 2022). The methodological framework of this research is available on the following diagram:

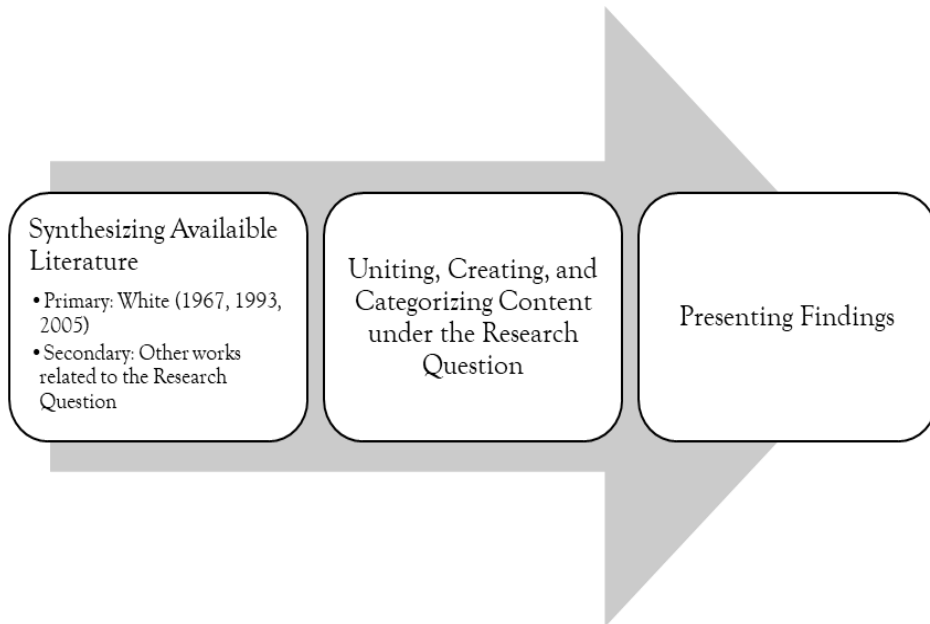


Figure 1. Content analysis method (Badzinski et al., 2022)

Anthropocentrism in its relation to Christian eco-theology

Religion is the foundation of human life and possibly constructs their worldview to encourage man to behave appropriately by what religion teaches since religion is a source of ethics and morals related to human life, including the relationship between man and God and the environment (Rozi & Taufik, 2020; Untung et al., 2021). Anthropocentrism, one of the emerging paradigms of Western society, stands as an argument that considers that nature was created solely as a tool of human expansion. Anthropocentrism can be stated as a critique of human chauvinism or as an admission of the ontological limits of humans. It is at odds with the environment and general non-human creatures, and It also appears to be at odds with extraterrestrial cosmologies, faiths, and philosophies. Anthropocentrism has given humans a perception of the world's structure and order while unavoidably reflecting the boundaries of that understanding. It impacts our politics, ethics, and other people's moral standing (Boddice, 2011, p. 1). Anthropocentrism, in a nutshell, is almost similar to

radical humanism in positioning humans with other creations. The term anthropocentrism is widely used in environmental literature to denote one of the critical causes of environmental damage (Kidner, 2014, p. 2), referring to an environmental-ethical theory that argues that humans are the center of the universe so that humans can use everything that exists in nature to fulfill their needs (Yuono, 2019).

Many theologians say that the roots of the emergence of anthropocentrism are associated with the book of Genesis in the Judeo-Christian Bible, where humans were created in the image of God and commanded to conquer the earth. Then, the paradigm developed in Christianity, Western philosophy, and all liberal thought (Keraf, 2010, p. 5). Some Western figures argue that the roots of the emergence of anthropocentrism can be found in the Christian tradition. Among these figures is Lynn White in their understanding of the book of Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 (Simkins, 2014, p. 5). Lynn White, a historian in the Middle Ages, greatly influenced the field of predominantly Christian ecology; he explained that Christianity greatly influenced the development of the anthropocentrism paradigm because the Christian dogma of human transcendence and natural control is excessive and does not pay attention to the priority rights of nature (White, 1967, p. 4).

According to White, Christianity is anthropocentric because it contains the teachings of taking God's transcendence to nature. Humans are creatures that live in this world. However, humans are on the side of God, who is above nature, so that, in essence, humans are separated from nature and have power over nature.

Factors causing the development of anthropocentrism in Christianity are based on four reasons: Firstly, the book of Genesis 1:28 serves as a foundational text that has been interpreted to encourage human dominion over nature, with the command to 'rule' and 'conquer' the earth. This interpretation

has led to a prioritization of human welfare over the balance between humans and nature. Secondly, the dualistic teachings of Christianity, which emphasise the distinction between soul and body, spiritual and physical, have fostered a sense of mastery and subjugation of the earth. Thirdly, certain biblical verses, such as those in 2 Peter 3:10, which speak of Jesus coming to destroy the earth, have contributed to a reluctance among some Christians to protect the planet, as it is believed to be destined for destruction. Lastly, Lynn White's argument that Christianity played a crucial role in the development of science and modern technology has highlighted the religion's impact on the uncontrolled exploitation of nature and the current ecological crisis.

Anthropocentrism and Christian eco-theology: a debate in history

The Holy Bible tells us that God formed man from clay in His image and likeness and breathed into him (Gen. 2:7). Glory, honor, and power to conquer the earth and all other creations were given to man. These explanations can be found in the verses contained in the book of Genesis, including (Gen. 1:26-28, 5:1, 9:6). The purpose of the creation of man on earth is as a representative of God in the conquest of the earth with a complete sense of responsibility, fulfilling God's plan with the mandates that God has given to man and so that humans have a good relationship with other creatures (Schüle, 2005). Christian eco-theology exists to respond to issues surrounding Anthropocentrism, which are emphasized to Christianity as the root of its development, including:

1. Response to white's thesis: was Christianity indeed an anthropocentric religion?

White's thesis entitled *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* (1967) has influenced the world of theology and science. This thesis is often referred to as the "White's thesis." White alleged that Western Christianity was at the root of the emergence of human anthropocentric attitudes leading to ecological issues at the time. The premise of White's paper was that 'all

forms of life affect their context', or that every living thing modifies its surroundings or habitat in some manner. He believed that even throughout the Middle Ages, man's interaction with the natural world was dynamic and responsive, but he saw the Industrial Revolution as a critical turning point in our ecological history. He contended that technological potential and scientific ideas had been united at this juncture, greatly enhancing human capacity to damage and exploit the environment. However, he also argued that the Industrial Revolution's mentality—that the planet was a resource for human consumption—was far older than the invention of technology and had its origins in views toward nature and medieval Christianity (White, 1967, p. 1205).

Accordingly, White also provided a way out. Considering the root of the ecological problem was religious, the solution, according to White, should also be spiritual. He wrote: "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one... Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man" (White, 1967, pp. 1206–1207). Somehow, White's analysis indicated an existence of misunderstanding in the content of the Bible and the teachings on the theory of creation, implying that the discontinuity between the human mind in understanding Christian teachings is the main factor triggering the problem of anthropocentrism in Christian eco-theology.

White's work initiated further discussion regarding environmental discourses within Christianity. Some scholars repudiated, commented on, and even criticized his work. Moncrief (1970), for example, condemned White as inaccurately analyzing much more than the statistics he offered to support that it is the leading influencer of human behavior toward the

environment. In contrast, Moncrief maintained that a variety of more complicated cultural and historical occurrences have impacted how we relate to the environment and that the outcome we see now cannot only be attributed to the influence of the Judeo-Christian heritage; as he wrote: “Judeo-Christian tradition is only one of many cultural factors contributing to the environmental crisis” (Moncrief, 1970, p. 508). McGrath (2002), on the other hand, said that the intellectual roots of the emergence of the White thesis are very shallow, and then White demonized Christianity as a result of ecological destruction (McGrath, 2002, p. xv). Moreover, the condition of Medieval Christianity cannot be discussed in isolation from the political, economic, and social frameworks that support them (Whitney, 1993). Therefore, condemning Christianity as the only stumbling block of environmental degradation should be considered traitorous.

As work initiated massive discussions within the scope of Christian Ecotheology afterward, it is also plausible to realize that, nonetheless, White’s claim, a tremendous rise of discussion debating his thesis was inevitable. As Jenkins (2009) has observed, decades have passed since the article by White was first published, and Christian ecotheologies have vigorously reacted. Almost all books on how Christianity interacts with the environment reference White's theory, and the majority begin with an unambiguous refutation. However, surveys often categorize the literature by cosmology and arrange it along a continuum of values. Therefore, even when White's criticism of Christianity is proven false, his fundamental interpretation of environmental issues often paves the path for theological research (Jenkins, 2009, pp. 285–286). Whitney (2005) beforehand emphasized that the massive influence of *The Root* was extraordinarily significant in shaping the 20th-century debate on Christian-environment relationships. Reviewing responses from some Biblical scholars and Ecotheologians such as James Barr, Carl Braaten, John Cobb, and Joseph

Sittler, Whitney found that even though many Ecotheologians vehemently disagreed with White, they were able to exploit his theory to support the idea that environmentalism was fundamentally a religious and ethical movement. Like White, they thought religious principles were the best defense against environmental deterioration and that Christianity was a good source of environmentally conscious attitudes (Whitney, 2005).

The most prominent figures repudiating White's thesis in history besides all those experts mentioned were possibly Whitehead (d. 1947) and Næss (d. 2009). While Whitehead agreed with the superior positions of humans among other creations following traditional Genesis interpretation, he disputed that the Bible supported anthropocentrism. According to Whitehead, the noble position of humans is God's mandate, which spiritually demands them to appreciate their position as representatives of God in the control of nature. Humans, therefore, must be responsible for what is in themselves and what is around them (Bennett, 1975). This idea, known chiefly as 'Process Theology,' inspired a particular school of Eco-Theology pioneered by John Cobb (Schwartz & Cobb, 2018).

Næss, on the other hand, offered an idea about 'deep ecology'. Deep ecology presents a comprehensive, holistic picture of the environment in which people exist and aims to apply the concept that the individual elements of the ecosystem (including humans) work as a whole. The philosophy covers the essential concepts of several environmental and green movements and argues for environmental ethics that promote wilderness preservation, non-coercive policies that encourage human population reduction, and simple living (Barry & Frankland, 2002, p. 161). In the framework of deep ecology, anthropocentrism leads to "...detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves... The attempt to ignore our dependence and to establish a master-slave role has contributed to the alienation of man from himself." (Naess, 1973, p. 96). Deep ecology,

therefore, conforms to a non-anthropocentric approach to ecological challenges.

From the various debates above, it can be seen that the relationship between biblical foundations, theological views, and environmental issues is not simple. Religion or theological views are not the only factors that inspire the birth of the ecological crisis in the modern era. The thesis proposed by White which shows that theological views born from an understanding of Western Christian teachings have a large role in the birth of ecological damage is not immediately affirmed by theologians who emerged after him. However, from various views and debates, all theologians and eco-theologians agree that the environment currently inhabited by humans is not in good condition. These theologians only disagree on whether the Christian theological foundation is a primary or secondary factor that contributes to environmental damage. From the various differences of view, it can be seen that theological foundations, in this context Christian theology, are one of the factors that have a role and contribution in environmental conservation and revitalization efforts.

2. *Imago Dei* and ecological issues: towards anthropocentrism in Christian ecotheology

Judaism and Christianity have a notion and theological belief known as the "image of God" or *Imago Dei*. Christian and Jewish conceptions of human nature are fundamentally based on this idea. Genesis 1:27 says, which states "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God (*צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים*) He created him; male and female He created them" (*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, 1982, Chapter Genesis 1: 27) is the source of the main text for this phrase. For the advancement of human rights and the dignity of every human existence, regardless of class, color, gender, or handicap, the theology of the image of God gives significant support. The doctrine also has

something to do with discussions about the human resurrection, referring to the incarnation of Jesus Christ as "...the true image of the invisible God which we are destined to imitate." In this perspective, the image of God relates to humanity's eschatological destiny, which was proleptically realized in Jesus Christ ahead of time. This Christological-eschatological reconstruction of God's image may provide a firm basis for Christian conviction in humanity's unique place in God's economic history with the created universe.

There have been three main ways of perceiving the image of God throughout history. According to the *substantive* viewpoint, the attributes that tie God and humankind together, such as reason and morality, are where the image of God may be found. According to a *relational* interpretation, the picture may be found in how people interact with God and one another. According to a *functional* interpretation, people serve as God's agents and serve as His representatives in the created order (Grenz, 2001; Middleton, 2005). These three perspectives may each provide light on how closely humans resemble God and are not in direct opposition to one another, as Peterson (2016) asserted; however, both substantive and relational interpretation tend to dominate Christian tradition, while the functional interpretation plays a role within Judaism (Peterson, 2016).

Imago Dei turns out to be associated with the Anthropocentric approach to ecological issues. McDougall (2003), for example, claimed that Christian anthropology assigns humans as the lone exemplar of the *Imago Dei* and dismisses the relevance of the rest of creation as just a backdrop for the human redemption drama. On the other hand, the ecological worldview described here provides a concept of the *Imago Dei* that is assigned derivatively to humans in that it is already founded and represented in the rest of creation. That is, if Christianity attests to a divine presence that is relational at its heart (Trinity). The profoundly relational cosmos is the

primordial *Imago Dei* from which human beings have evolved, consciously capable of claiming the ultimate dignity and destiny of existence (McDougall, 2003, pp. 46–47).

Moreover, Grasse (2017) emphasised that Genesis 1:27 lays not only the groundwork for anthropocentric doctrines held by Christians in the form of *Imago Dei* but also conforms to the notion of lordship over creation. The concept that people have God-given sovereignty over creation is anthropocentric; according to this viewpoint, humanity has power over all of nature: “The doctrine of *Imago Dei* further establishes this special, elevated status of humanity. No other species is specifically said to be made in the likeness of God; this reinforces the idea that humankind is superior to the rest of creation” (Grasse, 2017, p. 3). Asserting White’s idea concerning the Anthropocentric nature of Christianity, Moritz (2011), last but not least, argued that the practices of environmental degradation that generate animal suffering and worldwide species extinctions emerge from an ideology founded in the premise, “The world was built for man and man was meant to control it” conceptualized upon *Imago Dei*; justifying that humans are fundamentally different from other animals and that the *Imago Dei* is present in the same features that distinguish humans from other species (Moritz, 2011, pp. 308–309).

Imago Dei, to conclude, implies that human imagery with God has a meaning as a call that embodies God's representation that humans are given the obligation to carry out their functions as representatives of God (Makinggung et al., 2021). The call to represent God is a commandment to take responsibility for the world as God will do (Hiebert, 2019, p. 7). As it has been debated, however, an awareness of the responsibility given by God to humans must accompany human life in acting on nature. It should be understood that the manifestation of this responsibility is not achieved by understanding the anthropocentrism associated with biblical teachings.

Because human responsibility is returned and only focused on God, the center of life is not human but God's creator. Thus the words reign and conquer in the book of Genesis are a unique appeal to humans such as *Imago Dei*, who reflect divine characteristics with their particular responsibilities and duties in this world. Man represents God over His creation and expresses love and care for Him; so the command to conquer and subjugate is not an order to exploit but to serve (Mangum, 1989, p. 50). As Ngahu (2020) explained, the true meaning of the command to rule and conquer in the Bible should be likened to a shepherd who is tending to his shepherd. Likewise, humans, the human command to rule and conquer means an effort to manage nature well. Humans are required to do everything they can to maintain natural ecosystems; that is what is meant by the essence of the command to conquer and dominate, which is described in the book of Genesis (Ngahu, 2020).

Lastly, the Christian paradigm of *Imago Dei* concerning Anthropocentrism in the book of Genesis can be understood through the following two points. *Firstly*, the idea that humans are created in the image of God is an argument that means that humans are unique creatures. This uniqueness makes humans have a special responsibility to act as stewards and caretakers of nature with a sense of responsibility. *Secondly*, the role of ruler and conqueror, as stated in the chapter of the book of Genesis, is a command to control creation by managing nature properly. If humans fail to take care of nature, it means that humans have been unable to become a unique creation in the eyes of God because special human honor goes hand in hand with particular human tasks.

The interpretation of the passage is inextricably linked to the socioeconomic conditions under which the society emerged. Western society's ideology helps to shape this perspective. One feature of Western society is self-centered thinking, or, in this case, human thinking. This

perspective can likewise obscure knowledge of the Bible (Richards & O'Brien, 2012). This viewpoint eventually gave way to an anthropocentric worldview (Hiebert, 2017). This viewpoint does not envision a society that is prepared and obedient to God's will (Yahya & Ilahi, 2021: 156); rather, it believes God exists to meet human wants. In other languages, this viewpoint is founded on "anthropocentric stewardship" (Saputra & Maharani, 2023), not "theocentric servanthood" (Hiebert, 2017). As a consequence, in Christian-based environmental conservation activities, the primary task is to move the verse's interpretation from the "anthropocentric stewardship" paradigm to the "theocentric servanthood" paradigm.

Christian eco-theology from Anthropocentrism to theocentrism: reinterpretation of Imago Dei

The problem of modern society today that links the Anthropocentrism paradigm with Christian teachings is a problem caused by a misunderstanding of the biblical text in the book of Genesis, which indirectly causes human anthropocentric nature to exploit nature and the living creatures in it for human needs (Hiebert, 2019; Mingucci, 2021; Provan, 2021). However, these accusations can be explained by deepening and analysing the understanding of the Holy Bible.

It should be understood that humans are not only seen as social creatures but as ecological creatures whose existence cannot be separated from other living things. If life is centered on humans, life will not run in an orderly manner because human life is very dependent on and closely related to all creations in the universe. That way, it can be understood that what sustains human life is the human group and the entire creation outside of humans. Therefore, humans must have obligations and responsibilities towards fellow creatures in the universe (Hiebert, 2019). In this sense, Christianity may not accept the anthropocentric approach, apart from the significant influence of

White's contemplation concerning the current environmental crisis concerning the Bible.

The theocentric approach is a different way of resolving ecological issues founded within the theological basis of religion. Lowe et al. (2021), for example, proposed theocentrism as a biblically acceptable and conceptually successful method of transcending and reconciling opposing anthropocentric and eco/biocentric worldviews by showing brave and persistent leadership in reconciling conservation and development, relief and development agencies have the chance to make essential and biblically sound contributions to rethinking our flawed understanding of Christian mission and reorienting the church toward a more theocentric approach in an era defined by human-caused environmental change. They will also be able to design and model conservation and development methods that recognize the God-given worth of all creation while transcending the false dichotomies and superficial reconciliation efforts of many global solutions. Win-win solutions that protect biodiversity and improve human well-being may be challenging to implement because they involve a comprehensive and honest assessment of benefits, losses, costs, and tradeoffs that can be openly debated and negotiated (Lowe et al., 2021).

On the other hand, it is also observable that the reinterpretation of *Imago Dei* possibly influences the further understanding of the theocentric framework in Christian Eco-theology. Heuvel (2018), in this case, adapted Francis's idea that the concept of *Imago Dei* does not necessarily imply an anthropocentric basis. Francis himself claimed that... "... The Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures." (Francis, 2015, p. 50). The concept of Christian God is indeed intimately present in each being without interfering with his creature's sovereignty, so the ultimate goal of other beings is not to be sought in humans. Instead, all creatures travel with humanity and through them toward a shared point of arrival: God, in that transcendent completeness where the risen Christ embraces and illuminates all (Heuvel, 2018,

pp. 54–55). As a result, humans should not lose sight of the reality that each species serves a distinct role, clearly defining a proper critique of Anthropocentrism based on Biblical interpretation, which Heuvel then defined as the ‘theocentric conception of nature.’ (Heuvel, 2018)

Earlier, Russell (2003, 2022) discussed Barbour and Hefner’s concern regarding the Christian perspective towards nature and technology. Although both experts did not explicitly mention ‘theocentric’ as an approach, the conceptual structure of *Imago Dei*, again, played an essential role in reconceptualizing present-day Christian eco-theological ideas. Combining Barbour’s ‘union stewardship’ model (Barbour, 2002) and Hefner’s ‘created co-creator’ proposal (Hefner, 1998, 2005), Russell confirmed his formulation of ‘eschatological companion’ (Russell, 2003) or ‘eschatological family of life on earth’ (Russell, 2022) to evaluate initial theocentric suggestion of human-nature relationships and go beyond temporal dialogue between them.

Eschatological companion realises that the true connection of humankind and the world “... should be based on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, since this is what makes Christian faith distinctively Christian” (Russell, 2003, p. 156). In this light, Russell presented a new model for the human person in which the risen Christ alters the *imago Dei*, and we become the "eschatological companion" to all life on earth, taking up and rephrasing the topic of Romans 8. He went on to say that under God's impending reign, humanity would not leave behind coral reefs, hummingbirds, Antarctic cold-water algae, or many currently extinct species.

On the contrary, if there is life elsewhere in the cosmos, terrestrial life will eventually combine with life elsewhere in the universe. If Christians are to live as Christians today amid the Easter dawning of a new era, they must focus all of their ultimate ambitions, aspirations, and beliefs toward this eschatological destiny. Russell said unequivocally that somehow all of nature, not just people, is destined to everlasting existence with God in relationship with each other, a

community of limitless and bliss-filled experience (Russell, 2003). Russell's theocentric model of eco-theology, as such, includes and celebrates the diversity of creations with a full realization that it is only via apocalyptic eschatology, starting with Jesus' death and resurrection and concluding in the cataclysmic transformation of the cosmos itself into the New Creation, will death be defeated and God provides everlasting life to all life on earth—and throughout the world.

The various debates and reinterpretation efforts above do not stop at the level of theoretical and theological debates, but have been manifested in the practice and real efforts of theologians in environmental issues. For example, in the context of Indonesia, ecological issues have received reflective and practical responses from theologians in Indonesia. It is inevitable that injustice around socio-ecological issues is present in the midst of plural Indonesian society. In several regions, the Church and Christian communities are present in the midst of society to provide motivation, assistance, and empowerment in upholding justice, both for society and the nature that is the victim. These various good practices were born from contextual theological reflection in order to respond to the environmental crisis and agrarian conflict (Ngelow & Mandalika, 2015). This shows that the various debates and reinterpretation efforts of considered verses to provide legitimacy for environmental destruction by the Christian community have yielded results. The view of theocentrism shows that humans are not the center of the entire environment but rather part of nature, which is entirely responsible to God. As mentioned above, this view will ultimately appreciate all life and preserve the nature of all life.

Conclusion

It is acceptable to say that anthropocentrism was part of the initial theological-scientific debate on Christian eco-theology in the present-day era. As the prominent figure in this discourse, Lynn White offered a strong vindication

concerning the anthropocentric nature of Christianity, which eventually led to the broader discussion of eco-theology from a Christian point of view. Later-generation scholars attempted to reformulate Christian eco-theology to evaluate Lynn's controversial ideas, giving birth to the theocentric approach of eco-theology. In addition, discourse and content analysis methods are inevitably appropriate to reveal proper apprehension about Anthropocentrism as a research question in detail, defining its characteristics and nature with a particular implication to the development of eco-theology in the Christian tradition.

Upon closer examination of the current debate on eco-theology, it is understandable that the theocentric model of eco-theology somehow displays some elements of Apologetics. It is due to those efforts mainly intended to 'safeguard' God from Biblical 'misinterpretation' and against repudiation. Nevertheless, the concrete formulation of how theocentrism significantly influences contemporary Apologetics in the eco-theological context may be another challenge, opening further occasions for the theological and philosophical discourse of eco-theology.

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