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Eco-justice Reformation: Re-imagining Ecumenical Witness in the Context of Climate Injustice

George Zachariah¹

Introduction

In the history of ecumenical social ethics, one can identify theological discussions on and engagement with ecological issues right from the initial stages. The harmful effect of technology on the environment was discussed with deep concern at the 1910 Edinburgh Mission conference. The destructive impact of technology, the consequences of war, and the new paradigm of industrial expansion and economic growth for the sake of profit and the plunder of the earth, raised profound questions about the future of God's creation. Subsequently, eco-theological reflections and actions became a major area of public witness for the ecumenical movement and the churches. In the ecumenical engagement with the distress of the earth, there are several trajectories, and this article is an attempt to highlight and to raise some critical reflections on the ecumenical discourses on and engagement with climate change, with special reference to theologies of Oikos, informed by the voices and perspectives from the margins.

Ecumenical Engagement with Ecological Concerns: A Historical Survey

During the 1950s and 1960s ecumenical social ethical deliberations were centered around the WCC Studies on Rapid Social Change.² Development was the catch word during this period. The Divine mandate given to Adam in the first creation story to subdue the earth, and reign over it became the foundation for a theology of development. In the dualism of history and nature, nature was perceived as a spiritless reality, and history was endowed with the vocation to exploit the nature through development. It is in this context that Joseph Sittler tried to expand the horizon of the ecumenical social thought to include the whole community of creation in his address at the New Delhi Assembly (1961). Interpreting the cosmic Christ hymn in Colossians, Sittler affirmed that since Christ is the foundation of all things, all things have access to his cosmic redemption.³

In the 1960s the Church and Society sub unit organized a program on the theme, "Faith and the Future of Humanity in a World of Science-based Technology." But this theme was criticized by radical activists within the ecumenical movement as they wanted WCC to engage in action for revolutionary social justice than in secondary matters like the impact of science and technology on humans and the rest of creation.⁴ The Church and Society Working Committee held in Nemi, Italy discussed the report on "Limits to Growth," and that report invited WCC to enter into a deeper engagement with forces that threaten the integrity of life. It was at the International Church and Society Conference on Technology and Development,

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² See Paul Abrecht, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change* (New York: Double Day, 1961).

³ Joseph Sittler, "Called to Unity" in *The Ecumenical Review* 14, no. 2 (1962): 181-87.

⁴ Paul Abrecht, "Some Reflections on Ecumenical Social Thought – Then and Now," 44.

held in Bucharest, Rumania in 1974 that the phrase “Sustainable Society” was used for the first time in the ecumenical discussions. The 1979 World Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, at MIT, Boston,⁵ was yet another significant event which radically transformed the direction of ecumenical social thought and praxis.

With the new awareness of the threats of unlimited development to survival, there came a shift in ecumenical social thought: From Genesis 1 (to subdue the earth) to Genesis 2 (to till and to keep). It is a shift from the dualism of history vs nature to the understanding of history as embedded in nature. The Church and Society conferences emphasized the need for a theology of the relationship between nature, humanity and God.⁶ The first UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), Stockholm, Sweden, 1972 was a watershed in the global engagement with environmental issues. The discussion at the Conference was dominated by concerns such as pollution, deforestation, and whaling, initiated by leaders from the Global North. It was the speech by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, that stirred the Conference. “There are grave misgivings that the discussion on ecology may be designed to distract attention from the problems of war and poverty... We have to prove to the disinherited majority of the world that ecology and conservation will not work against their interest but will bring an improvement in their lives.... Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters?”⁷

M.M. Thomas’ reflection on the Stockholm UNCHE proposed an alternative theological standpoint on ecological concerns. “The Biblical emphasis on man’s (*sic*) dominion over nature, the Hebraic tradition of fighting the religions of nature in the name of the creator God, and the Judeo-Christian stress on dynamics of purposive history over against the cyclic patterns of nature have indeed contributed in no small measure to the growth of an attitude that facilitated technological exploitation of nature and natural resources.”⁸ What we find here is a comprehensive critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition without reducing it to anthropocentrism as we see in the dominant strands of eco-theological reflections. Of course, Thomas here contests the anthropocentric theological anthropology of the priestly writers. But he goes further and critiques the Hebraic tradition’s rejection of the panentheistic traditions and the embeddedness of Judeo-Christian theology in dualism.

Echoing the perspective of Prime Minister Gandhi, Thomas observed that, “The churches have also the concern to see that the debate on environment does not become a provincial concern of the affluent rich societies. It has the tendency to become the preoccupation of the industrially advanced countries. The struggle of the poorer nations against poverty and for share in the world’s resources and development is a matter of justice as these are likely to be ignored or given second place. It is certainly irresponsible to talk about environment in isolation from the massive world problem of poverty, war and oppression.” Such a theological position which integrates the struggles of the poor and the struggles for ecological restoration was certainly unique at that time, and we see the same perspective in the sermon preached by Andre Duncan at the WCC worship service at Stockholm: “If it (Stockholm Conference) knows how to respond effectively to the groaning

⁵ Roger Shinn et al (eds.), *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches’ Conference on Faith, Science and Future*, MIT, Cambridge, USA, 1979, Geneva: WCC, 1980.

⁶ M.M. Thomas. “Earth Day: New Concepts of Development and New Theology of Nature Needed,” *Peoples Reporter* (April 16-30, 1990): 30.

⁷<http://lasulawsenvironmental.blogspot.in/2012/07/indira-gandhis-speech-at-stockholm.html>

⁸ M.M. Thomas. “The Concern for Cleaner Environment” *The Guardian* 4, no 24 (1972): 1.

of creation, this will not be in order to restore nature in itself, but deliver man (*sic*) and nature together from the threats of vanity and frustration.”⁹ What we find here in this historical exploration is not only the history of how the ecumenical movement responded to the challenges of the ecological crisis; but also how the representatives from the Global South critically evaluated and contested Eurocentric analysis and theological constructions, privileging their experiences of socio-economic and ecological injustice and exploitation.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the eruption of several social movements of people of color, women, poor, and minorities all over the world, challenging racism, economic injustice, patriarchy, and diverse manifestations of colonialism. Such movements influenced the ecumenical social thought, and as a result, search for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society (JPSS) became the major thrust of the ecumenical movement during the period between Nairobi assembly (1975) and Vancouver assembly (1983). The epistemological indebtedness of this new initiative to the subaltern social movements radically influenced the ecumenical perspective and politics of public witness in the context of structural injustice and environmental destruction. Justice remained the non-negotiable norm. Affirmation of moral agency reclaimed people as subjects of their destiny. Sustainable society; not sustainable development, affirmed and problematized the correlation between ecological injustice and socio-economic injustice.

Theological deliberations at Vancouver around the theme, “Jesus Christ, the Life of the World” enabled the ecumenical movement to discern and affirm publicly that confessing Christ as the life of the world demands from us the commitment to resist the powers of death. This discernment midwived a new initiative called Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The JPIC process invited the churches to enter into a covenant for justice, peace and integrity of creation to resist the threat to life and to develop viable alternatives that are life-affirming. It was a covenanting for a just economic order in the context of foreign-debt bondage, a culture of non-violence and security for all, a culture of co-existence to live in harmony with creation’s integrity, and the eradication of racism and all other ideologies and practices of social discrimination and exclusion. Here again we see how the ecumenical engagement with creation was able to recognize the interconnectedness between structural injustice and the ecological crisis.

Neo-liberal globalization and its violent impact on God’s creation compelled the ecumenical movement to rethink the meaning of Christian public witness, and Harare assembly (1998) and Porto Alegre assembly (2006) witnessed deeper engagement with this issue. As an outcome, the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) process was initiated. The AGAPE call exposed the idolatry of market, and affirmed the need to link poverty, wealth and ecology to address economic, social and ecological injustice. Oikotree movement came out of this process.

Theological reflections on Oikos affirm earth as our common home, and recognize the intersections between socio-economic and ecological injustices that the community of creation confront globally. Oikos perspective critically evaluates the dominant eco-theological standpoints and action plans as they fail to recognize the correlation between the ecological crisis and the prevailing unjust socio-economic systems. Theologies of Oikos further appreciate the panentheistic traditions and practices of indigenous and subaltern communities that are life-affirming and communitarian. The Bogor Statement (2012)

⁹ M.M. Thomas. “The Concern for Cleaner Environment,” 2.

articulated the Oikos perspective as a call to flourish the Economy of Life in the pilgrimage for justice and peace. "Economy in God's Oikos emerges from God's gracious offering of abundant life for all. We are inspired by Indigenous Peoples' image of 'Land is Life' which recognizes that the lives of people and the land are woven together in mutual interdependence. Thus, we express our belief that the creation's life and God's life are intertwined, and that God will be all in all."¹⁰ This statement is a robust articulation of the theology of Oikos.

Problematizing the Oikos Perspective: Voices from the Margins

We live in a new planetary era where the earth system processes are heavily influenced and altered by human intervention. The unprecedented increase in the emission of greenhouse gases and the steady decline in the wellbeing of the commons such as land, forest, water bodies, and the atmosphere indicate the dusk of the Holocene, a geological age known for stable climatic conditions which flourished the movement of life for 8,000 years. The Anthropocene, the new era, is primarily responsible for the present Climate crisis because it is the colonizing human (corporate) interventions on earth that disrupted the rhythm and integrity of earth. However, the term Anthropocene also affirms human agency to heal the earth and its children. The Anthropocene enables human beings to be self-reflexive as it exposes the colonial projects that plunders and commodifies the earth. It further inspires human communities to envision a redeemed earth and to participate in the politics of healing and restoring the earth.

However, in our mainstream theological reflections on and missional engagement with Climate Change, we tend to follow the dominant trajectories of perceiving the problem without realizing that our perception of the problem is always tainted by dominant interests. Since our diagnosis and prescriptions are informed by the logic of the prevailing order, they are incapable of addressing the root causes of the problem and bringing healing and restoration into our communities. Such discernment makes it imperative on us to begin our theological reflections by critically engaging with the dominant perceptions of the Climate crisis, and problematizing it, informed by the perspectives of the victims of Climate Change.

Climate Change, according to dominant narratives, is the rapid change in the mercury level due to *human*-induced green-house gas emissions. This blanket blame on *anthropogenic* emissions exposes the politics of Climate Change that continues to determine our diagnosis and solutions to the Climate crisis. The Declaration of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life, held in Bolivia, in October 2015 offers us an alternative problematization of the crisis. "Today, the people of the world, rise up against a capitalist system that promotes environmental business, commercialization and privatization of environmental functions of nature, which are and must remain a common good of the people. In capitalism, the common goods are privatized, and plundered and exploited for the benefit of a few individuals, businesses and corporations. The overall harmony of Mother Earth is the basis of our common heritage and the atmospheric space has become the most important common heritage of society. Atmospheric colonization with emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, because of excessive and irrational

¹⁰ Rogate R. Mshana and Athena Peralta (eds.), *Economy of Life: Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), 2.

industrialization of developed countries, has broken the balance of Mother Earth.”¹¹ The Declaration diagnoses colonization of the commons as the root cause for the Climate crisis. Instead of blaming *anthropogenic* emissions, which in fact absolves the carbon sins of the corporations, the Declaration identifies the problem as Climate Injustice caused by the colonization of the commons.

Three Dalit women from India, who attended the COP 15 Summit in Copenhagen also made a similar observation: “Upper caste farmers use machines to plough their land, heightening the climate crisis with fertilizer and other things. Our impact on the climate is much smaller. Larger farmers grow money, we grow food.”¹² The wisdom and political analysis of these untouchable women, is an alternative problematization of the Climate crisis which exposes the correlation between the casteist (racist) world view and the capitalistic colonization of the commons. Naomi Klein echoes the same concern when she observes, “we have to see how climate change, racism, austerity, deepening income inequality, mass incarceration are all deeply interconnected.”¹³

Even though Pope Francis and his ecological encyclical continues to inspire us to strive together to restore the beauty and integrity of *our common home*, we need to remember that the very perception of the earth as *our common home* itself is a contested metaphor. Climate refugees are a new ethnicity that we come across all over the world for whom there is no place to be considered as home. While the causes of the violent conflict in Syria are political, we need to recognize that a prolonged drought just before the 2011 violent uprising may have played a role in the ongoing civil war. Recent studies observe that drought in Syria which has aggravated to record levels by global warming has pushed social unrest into an open uprising in 2011.¹⁴ Drying and drought in Syria from 2006 to 2011 has destroyed agriculture. Seventy-five percent of the farmers in the northeast region of the country suffered total crop failure. Herders in the region lost around eighty-five percent of their cattle. As a result, millions of farmers and herders had to migrate to urban areas. The drought also escalated food prices, aggravating hunger and poverty. In other words, drought and food scarcity in Syria caused by Climate Change has resulted in violent conflicts over resources and led to the displacement of about two million people. That means along with other stressors, Climate Change also contributed to the current refugee crisis.

Bangladesh is a low-lying country where more than sixty percent of the country is mere five meters above the sea level. Currently 3.5 million people live in Dhaka’s slums and seventy percent of them are climate refugees. A 3.6°F increase will displace twenty million people in Bangladesh. The only option for them is to migrate to India. But India has already erected a barbed wire fence to prevent the climate refugees crossing its borders. Reflecting upon the experience of the Pacific islanders, Maina Talia observes that, “Relocation literally means our death, as it entails profound losses for us – loss of our land, loss of our culture, loss of our language and the loss of our identity.”¹⁵ These laments are voices that contest our feel-good environmentalism where we valorize terms such as *Oikos* and *our common home*, and at the same time engage in the politics of wall-building, privatizing the *Oikos*. Black

¹¹ <http://www.planificacion.gob.bo/uploads/2.STATEMENT%20WORLD%20PEOPLE%20TIQUIPAYA.pdf>

¹² <http://idsn.org/resources/case-stories/upper-caste-farmers-grow-money-we-grow-food>

¹³ <http://hub.jhu.edu/2016/02/24/naomi-klein-foreign-affairs-symposium>

¹⁴ <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/11/3241>

¹⁵ Maina Talia, “We Have No Right to be Silent: The Cry of a Climate Victim,” in *Theologies and Cultures* 12 no. 2, (2015): 17.

theologian James Cone shifts this discussion into a different level by stating that, the basic question for us is not whether we are concerned about the future of the earth, but “whose earth is it, anyway?”¹⁶ What we find in Cone’s disturbing contestation is an invitation to go beyond romanticizing the Oikos and to perceive Climate crisis as Climate Injustice caused by the colonization of the commons, and to engage in the struggles for Climate Justice.

An intersectional approach informs us that Climate Change is essentially a justice issue because those who are least responsible for the Climate crisis are forced to bear its gravest consequences. While the Global North has contributed disproportionately to the carbon dioxide emissions, the Global South continues to suffer the worst climate catastrophes. Global negotiations and decisions on Climate Change are always controlled by the wealthiest developed nations, and instead of changing their carbon-intensive economic orders, they use the Climate crisis as an opportunity to continue their economic colonization of the Global South through “disaster capitalism.” It is the polluters and colonizers of the global commons who decide which communities are worth protecting and saving.

Climate Change affects the most vulnerable communities such as women, people of color, and indigenous communities disproportionately. The disproportionate exposure to climate change and toxicity that these communities experience is nothing but environmental racism and Climate apartheid. Climate Change further affects social and environmental determinants of health such as clean air, safe drinking water, food security, and secure shelter. Climate Change is a life and death issue for the vulnerable populations. As Naomi Klein observes, “we have to see how climate change, racism, austerity, deepening income inequality, mass incarceration are all deeply interconnected.”¹⁷

The historic struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (SRST) against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a 1,134 mile long oil pipeline from the fracking fields in North Dakota to the refineries in Illinois to transport over 570,000 barrels of oil per day, is a contemporary movement that continues to expose Climate injustice and environmental racism. The original path of the pipeline ran next to Bismarck, the North Dakota capital, but it was rerouted because of concerns over potential contamination of water supplies. The new route instead takes it through ancestral Native American lands, including burial grounds, and would cross beneath the Missouri River at the border of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The Sioux native communities objected that the current route will threaten their water supply, upset the ecological balance of the region, disrupt tribal traditions and violate sacred lands. Further, the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline would contribute to fifty million tons of CO₂ per year which is the equivalent of ten million cars or fifteen coal plants. Thousands of “water protectors” of many faiths have gathered by at Standing Rock, engaging in prayerful ceremonies, consciousness-building and, civil disobedience to expose this blatant manifestation of environmental racism and Climate apartheid. The Obama administration has temporarily suspended drilling beneath the river, but the company building the pipeline, has vowed to complete it.

Standing Rock is a conflict between two world views. On one side, we see the proponents of the doctrine that land is merely a warehouse of lifeless materials that have been given to (some of) us by God or conquest, to consume and exploit. Human vocation,

¹⁶ James H. Cone, “Whose Earth is it, Anyway?” in *Earth Habitat: Eco-Injustice and the Church’s Response*, eds. Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 30, 32.

¹⁷ <https://hub.jhu.edu/2016/02/24/naomi-klein-foreign-affairs-symposium>

according to this doctrine, is to convert water, soils, minerals, wild lives, and human yearning into corporate wealth, and the state is committed to support and protect this plunder. On the other side, we see people who consider land as a nourishing gift to all beings. The fertile soil, the fresh water, the clear air, and the creatures require gratitude and respect. These gifts are not commodities. The land is sacred and a living breathing entity. Instead of valorizing a homogenous perspective on Oikos, our theologies of Oikos need to engage with these conflicting worldviews, and I propose Commons as an alternative metaphor for out theological and missional engagement with the Climate crisis.

Re-imagining Ecumenical Witness in the Context of the Colonization of the Commons

The proposal to consider commons as the paradigm for redeeming life in the context of Climate Change is profoundly theological and political. “Even though commons are often criticized as ‘wastelands’ or ‘tragedies,’ the truth is that they are *generative*. Commons quietly meet important household needs – the original goal of economics. They also disproportionately benefit women (and subaltern communities), who rely so much on commons to provide household food, care work and community. Natural systems, too, are more likely to be happily integrated with a culture of commoning than with the culture of global capitalism. For all these reasons, the commons can help us move beyond the problematic history of conventional development because it proffers different theories of value and human aspiration than those of the price system and the state.”¹⁸ However what we witness today is not only the colonization of the commons, but also the introduction of new “commons” developed in the mold of neo-liberal capitalism. This calls for the political discernment to reject the commons of the market and to engage in the creative work of “commoning,” reclaiming and creating life affirming commons.

Commons are sanctuaries of the community of creation committed to continue God’s creative work by birthing, nurturing, protecting, and celebrating life in abundance. It is in the commons that we practice our vocation to till and to keep the earth. The commons is the sacred space where we celebrate communion with the Creator in the community of our siblings – the plants, the birds, the water bodies, and the air. Commons is the Scripture that reveals the glory of God, and our life together as community of creation in the commons is the true doxology. Colonization of the commons is therefore, a desecration of this sacred space and sacred communion, and hence a sin against God. Climate Injustice is a theological problem because it subverts God’s purpose, and destroys the life that God created with God’s own breath. Using the paradigm of commons let us make some tentative theological re-imaginings.

Commons: The God-indwelling Sanctuaries

The Judeo-Christian tradition, thanks to its monotheistic theological affirmations, has always been suspicious about the idolatrous tendencies within the earth-healing practices of the subaltern communities. As a result, Christianity has propagated an earth-denying spirituality which prevented the Church from inspiring its adherents to engage in ministries

¹⁸<http://www.countercurrents.org/2016/06/30/beyond-development-the-commons-as-a-new-old-paradigm-of-human-flourishing>

of creation-care. As a result, Christian faith and its Scripture bear a huge guilt for the contemporary ecological crisis. When our theology is incapable of stirring us to experience the Divine presence in the commons, nature is being perceived as creatures without intrinsic worth, created to serve the needs and greed of human beings. A theological re-imagination, informed by the paradigm of commons invites us to discern the earth and our commons as God-indwelling sanctuaries. Instead of demonizing panentheistic theological imaginations as idolatrous, let us confront and destroy the idols of neo-liberal capitalism and development that desecrate our commons, the body of God.

Human Beings: The Priests of the Commons

The theological understanding of human beings, as articulated in the dominant strands of the doctrine of theological anthropology, requires reformulation even as we engage in theological re-imaginings using commons as the paradigm. The Priestly account of the creation narrative is the foundation for the separation of human beings from the rest of nature: Human beings are created in the image of God with the duty to have dominion over other creatures. The theological anthropology of the Priestly account proclaims the radical difference of human beings from the rest of creation, and their right and duty to subdue and dominate other creatures. The Hellenistic influence on Christian theology further developed this theological anthropology into a system based on dualism. Human beings find their flourishing not in their horizontal relationship of embeddedness in the natural world or physical embodiment, but in their vertical relationship with God. This philosophical notion gave birth to a theological anthropology, according to which human beings are nothing but strangers and pilgrims in the world. Anthropocentrism is hence a worldview, based on the perspective that all non-human beings and nature are means for human flourishing, which is the ideology behind the colonization of the commons.

While critiquing anthropocentrism, eco-theological reformulations of the doctrine of theological anthropology tend to portray human beings as a homogenous category, and blame even people with almost zero-carbon foot print for the Climate crisis by diagnosing *human*-induced emission as the root cause for the crisis. Further, a rejection of anthropocentrism is genocidal and leads to ethnic cleansing as this doctrine is being used to criminalize subsistence communities living in communion with the commons for the destruction of the commons. Differently said, an eco-theological reformulation of the doctrine of theological anthropology has the potential to become misanthropic and racist.

Orthodox theology is a helpful resource to reformulate the doctrine of theological anthropology using commons as the paradigm. In the Orthodox theological anthropology, human beings are understood as microcosm which rejects all dichotomies and integrates human beings with the rest of the nature. As microcosm, human beings are integrally connected with the commons, and hence, in the colonization of the commons, human beings are also colonized. Orthodox theology discerns human beings as the priests of creation.

Humanity has a special vocation as the priest of creation, as the mediator through whom God manifests himself [*sic*] to creation and redeems it. But this does not make humanity totally discontinuous with creation, since a priest has to be an integral part of the people he [*sic*] represents. Christ has become part of creation, and in his created

body he lifted up the creation to God, and humankind must participate in this eternal priesthood of Christ.”¹⁹

A theological anthropology, informed by the paradigm of commons, invites us to be the priests of the commons.

Church: A Subversive and Creative Presence Engaged in the Mission of “Commoning”

As Berta Cáceres, the Honduran indigenous rights campaigner, rightly observed; “there is an imposition of a project of domination, of violent oppression, of militarization, of violation of human rights, of transnationalization, of the turning over of the riches and sovereignty of the land to corporate capital, for it to privatize energy, the rivers, the land; for mining exploitation; for the creation of development zones.”²⁰ And she became a martyr in protecting those commons. The slogan of the eco-socialist movements, “System Change; not Climate Change” becomes paradigmatic here as it invites the Church to re-imagine its mission to become a subversive and creative presence, engaging in the mission of “commoning.” “Commoning” signifies commons as verb; an active political engagement through which the community of creation flourishes its life and continues to nurture, protect, and celebrate life. Church happens when “commoning” becomes a reality in our communities. This mission also involves the courage to denounce and reject dominant models of commons emerging from the logic of neo-liberal capitalism. “Commoning” invites us to create sanctuaries that provide solidarity and hospitality to Climate refugees defying the policies of our states and religious communities. “Commoning” is the public witness of protecting life in the context of Climate Injustice.

In James Cameron’s epic movie *Avatar*, when Jake experiences beauty, love, and celebration of life in the moral universe and the community practices of the Na’vi people, we see a transformation happening in Jake. When Neytiri was about to kill Jake, the sacred seed surrounded him, and her mother explained its message: “Don’t kill him. Give him one more chance. He can change.” Such encounters with the moral universe of the other lead us to new metamorphosis. Jake became a new person and decided to come out of the imperial mission of plunder and destruction. Differently said, panentheistic traditions and practices of the indigenous communities are sources that can inform and transform us in the context of Climate Change. But the military commander was angry and asked Jake, “How does it feel to betray our race?” Our encounters with the moral universe of the subaltern communities enable us to discern the violence inherent in our doctrines and worldviews. Such encounters also empower us to betray our theologies and traditions that continue to legitimize the desecration and colonization of the commons. Betrayal and rejection of our privileges and worldviews is hence a faith imperative to live out our faith in the context of the colonization of the commons.

¹⁹ Paulos Mar Gregorios, *The Human Presence: Ecological Spirituality and the Age of the Spirit* (New York: Amity House, 1987), 89.

²⁰<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/20/honduran-indigenous-rights-campaigner-wins-goldman-prize>