Global Warming and Religion

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay’s first paragraph.

"Introduction

John A. Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker argue that it is the responsibility for religious people and organizations to combat the environmental crises, including global warming. David C. Barker and David H. Bearce, however, describe the end-times belief that some Christians follow which leads many to disregard the current effects of the ecological crises. I will support the views of Grim and Tucker as well as discuss the current responses toward the ecological crises."
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Introduction

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1. Responsibilities Regarding Global Warming

Global warming is one of the most widely discussed aspects of the environmental crises. It is the increase in the temperature of the earth’s atmosphere due to increased levels of carbon dioxide and other pollutants. These pollutants are greatly harming nature across the world. Humans and our technology are the cause of this pollution and destruction. It is therefore our responsibility to attempt to counteract these negative effects created by our own advancements.
This feeling of responsibility for the earth is common in many religious denominations throughout the world.

In Hinduism there is a strong calling to respond to the environmental crises. Global warming has negatively affected countless parts of nature, including many groves and forests held sacred by Hindus. Hinduism holds the belief that all organisms and nature are connected. We are therefore hurt by global warming just as much as nature is. Govindasamy Agoramoorthy and Minna J. Hsu maintain that “It is now time to reinvent an ecological way of living based on spiritual values in order to mitigate the climate change” (215). They are saying that we must work now to counteract the effects of global warming, especially before it becomes even worse. It is our responsibility to find a way to live without destroying the earth.

Pope Francis has also made many statements on the responsibility to take care of the earth. In *Laudato Si’*, his 2015 encyclical letter, he states: “If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn ‘realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith’” (par. 64). Though he is specifically Catholic, he states that it is the responsibility and duty of all Christians to take care of the earth, the creation. He even encompasses all of humanity when describing this responsibility by stating that it is “a fact of being human” to care for the environment. No matter what religion one follows, we all must try to protect and care for the earth. We all share the planet, so we all hold responsibility for the well-being of our earth.

However, there are some people that do not think that global warming should be of concern. Specifically, there are Christians that hold end-times beliefs. End-times believers maintain that Jesus will return to Earth and begin a series of events that will end in a battle
between good and evil. “The most popular account of these events is known as ‘premillennial dispensationalism’ – which projects that earthly conditions must precipitously deteriorate prior to the Second Coming” (Barker and Bearce, 268). Those that believe in the end-times think that global warming, as well as the rest of the environmental crises, is a part of this “deterioration of earthly conditions”. Therefore, they do nothing to prevent global warming because, to them, they would also be trying to prevent the Second Coming of Jesus. In their mind this is much worse than doing nothing to save the planet.

Nonetheless, their responsibility to care for the earth is much greater than their end-times beliefs. Like the rest of us, they are humans. They therefore have just as much responsibility to care for the earth. As Pope Francis says “The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone” (par. 95). We all must take care of this earth that we share so that everyone has a chance to live. Whether we believe in end-times, Christianity, Hinduism, or any other religion, we must work together to counteract global warming and all environmental crises. It is our duty to protect the future of this earth that we share.

Even those who do not look at environmentalism from a religious viewpoint recognize or responsibility to the earth. The Union of Concerned Scientists states: “We must recognize the earth’s limited capacity to provide for us. We must recognize its fragility. We must no longer allow it to be ravaged” (Grim and Tucker, 10). These scientists see the enormity of our ecological situation, so the Union calls for the cooperation of scientists, business leaders, and religious leaders to help save our planet. Religious leaders must work together with science and help create a new ethic regarding religious environmentalism as well as help us understand the
importance of being eco-friendly. It is every human being’s responsibility to do everything they can to reverse the environmental crises.

2. Religious Responses
There are many different responses to the ecological crises. All religions have their own responses, however Laurel Kearns discusses three specific “Christian-related eco-theology” models (55). These models are eco-justice, Christian stewardship, and creation spirituality. Each response is unique, yet they all recognize the importance of caring for the earth.

The eco-justice model combines the Christian social justice framework with environmental concerns and problems such as global warming. Kearns explains that “From this viewpoint what is needed is correct praxis and the true embodiment of Christian community” (64). The best way to get a large amount of people to these follow pro-environmental practices which are considered “correct” is to create laws that coincide with both environmentalist values and Christian values. This concern for environmentalist values causes a very political focus that many criticize as too secular. However, the eco-justice model is also criticized as being too religious for those who are not Christian. Due to the extensive criticisms of the eco-justice model, it is not a very popular one.

Conversely, the creation spirituality model has an overtly religious focus. Creation spiritualists concentrate on the Genesis story of the evolution of the universe. They view it as “a common origin story for all peoples” that tells us “we are all one, we all come from the same origins and are all a part of the same story (including its potential ending)” (Kearns, 60). Since we are all just one part of the larger whole, creation, we must do what we can to treat the earth well and try to undo the damage that we have caused. The biggest problem that is faced by creation spirituality is “overcoming the dualisms of the western worldview so that we can see the creation as a whole” (Kearns, 61).
John D’Arcy May proposes a way to “overcome dualism in our thinking and feeling” (214). He believes that the best way to do this is to create a Buddhist-Christian relationship. The use of meditation can put us better in tune with the earth as individuals and we can then better understand the environmental problems that we have caused. Robert Kennedy said that both Buddhists and Christians must “‘leave’ our traditions in order to ‘be’ the Buddha-Christ” (as quoted in May, 215). It is the only way to see the unity in our traditions so that we can work together in saving the earth.

Similarly to creation spirituality, Christian stewardship also focuses on a Genesis story. In this case it focuses on the Genesis commandment that gives humans dominion over the earth. Christian stewardship reinterprets the commandment “as a divine charge to be good stewards and to take care of and protect (but not rule or perfect, as in older interpretations of the passage) the Creator’s creation” (Kearns, 58). Christian stewardship directly counteracts Lynn White’s claim that “‘Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt’ for the ecological crisis” (Kearns, 55) by stating that “The problem is not with Christianity, but with not being true to Christianity” (Kearns, 59). In order to be true to Christianity we must care for the earth. It is our duty to take care of the earth, not have “dominion” over it and destroy it as we please.

According to Willis Jenkins, “The environmental task [is] therefore clear: recover an ecological worldview centered on nature’s value rather than human transcendence” (284). He also states that “The moral for Christian ethics is to focus less on the ecological quality of worldviews and more on the possibilities within Christian experience for participatory adaptations to contextual problems” (294). This view fits the Christian stewardship model because it puts value in nature rather than considering it to be something there just for our use. It also specifically mentions rethinking Christian morals to fit the current problems that we are
facing. Since nature has value, we must find a way to take care of it and try to reverse the ecological crises that we created.

Pope Francis also has a view that tends to fit within the Christian stewardship model. In his 2015 encyclical letter, he states that “When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society” (par. 82). The serious consequences he mentions are the environmental crises that are plaguing our earth, such as global warming and deforestation. Pope Francis also states that “Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it” (par. 23) He believes that it is our duty to care for the earth, not destroy it in our attempts to make more money or own it. Nature is important so we must do everything we can to keep from destroying it, and we must try to amend the problems we have already caused, even if it means changing our current lifestyles.

One thing that both creation spirituality and Christian stewardship have in common is the belief that religion must work together with science to mitigate the environmental crises. “Both seek to make aspects of what science has to teach us about the current situation more accessible, and to incorporate that knowledge within a religious worldview as a key way to address the environmental crisis” (Kearns, 58). We need to understand some of the science in order to understand what truly needs to be changed. Since there is religion all over the world, it is necessary to incorporate religious morals and values. The best way to help save our planet is to work with both religion and science, rather than choosing one over the other.

Conclusion

All religions across the world have a duty to care for the earth and combat the many environmental crises affecting our home. Nature is very important because it not only helps humans survive, but so many different species. Allowing environmental crises that we created to
ravage the earth is morally unacceptable. There have already been many responses to the
environmental crises from many different religions, but all religions must work together along
with science to make a lasting effect.

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