"As Leah Schade makes clear, we need to green the pulpit if we're going to green the planet. She provides some excellent advice about how to do that in a sound and transformative way!"
— Bill McKibben, Author of *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation*

"Preachers can no longer avoid addressing the issues of climate change and environmental injustice. Finally, we have a substantial book to support us in this calling. Deeply grounded in environmental ethics and eco-feminist theology, Leah Schade provides both a theoretical framework and practical strategies to help preachers speak to the crisis facing God's creation. Schade has provided an essential resource for the urgent situation we face. Every preacher should read this book. Now."
— Charles Campbell, Duke Divinity School and Coauthor of *Preaching Fools: The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly*

"In *Creation-Crisis Preaching,* Leah Schade provides both a compelling case for, as well as a fully developed guide to, preaching on creation. Writing as a Lutheran pastor, feminist theologian, and ardent environmentalist, Schade plumbs the depths of history, theology, and homiletics to help preachers provide their hearers with a new frame of reference by which to enter into a deeper relationship with God's good Creation and, ultimately, each other."
— David Lose, President, Lutheran Theological Seminary and Author of *Preaching at the Crossroads*

"*Creation-Crisis Preaching* is bold and prophetic. Grounded in the gospel and a theology of the cross that names God's hidden yet startling presence in the midst of suffering, Dr. Leah Schade draws on the profound insights of ecofeminist theology to help preaching address and engage environmental injustice. She shows us how our own sermons can be a moment where God's Creation is even now 'flowering, leafing, and fruiting' in the fecund, liminal space between eco-crucifixion and eco-resurrection."
— David Schnasa Jacobsen, Boston University

"How is the Word of God in Scripture to be proclaimed as hope in the midst of eco-catastrophe? What does it mean to preach Jesus Christ living, crucified, and risen in light of the linked oppression of Earth and women? How is the preacher to proclaim what God is doing to bring about eco-resurrection? Schade's daring venture at the intersection of ecofeminist theology and homiletics plunges the reader into these courageous and vital questions. Her response is theologically compelling, faithful, forthright, and hope-inspiring. Articulating a Lutheran ecofeminist Christology and its implications for preaching, the author charts a course to preaching that is faithful to the Gospel and responsive to the cries of the Earth and people who suffer with its degradation. This remarkable book is a gift to the church and the world, and is a work of abiding love—love for the church, the Word of God, the Earth, and its creatures (human included). While grounded in Lutheran traditions, Schade's guidance in this book will be relished by people of other Christian traditions and beyond. It is a must-read for all who hunger to hear and proclaim God's word of life in our day."
— Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

"Can one preach a good word in season and out of season, when seasons may not be around for too long? Can one communicate the good news in a world of broken dreams and shattered hopes, when the world as we know it is facing human-made catastrophes on an unprecedented scale? Can the legacy of Lutheran thinking be of value in addressing ecological issues and themes? Not one to shy away from penetrating and pertinent questions amidst the messiness of everyday life, Pastor Schade is warmly commended for her passionate and pastoral advocacy of a creation-centered approach to the ongoing calling to faithful preaching."
— J. Jayakiran Sebastian, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"Leah Schade's *Creation-Crisis Preaching* is a profoundly moving vision of a new Christian homiletics focused on Earth's bounty as God's gift to all of us, human and more-than-human alike. Firmly rooted in the splendor of Pennsylvania's upper Susquehanna Valley, and its degradation from hydraulic fracturing, Schade's pastoral vision is biblically sonorous and liturgically prophetic. Beautifully written and persuasively argued, this exercise in green preaching will offer readers a road map for the future of a church that is recovering its love of creation."
— Mark Wallace, Swarthmore College, Author of *Green Christianity*

"With this slingshot of a book Leah Schade has alerted the people, named the danger, and taken aim to help topple the creation-killing Goliaths of our day. She calls the preacher to claim the Biblical privilege and power for environmental story and truth-telling, and then lays out possibilities for those who would be, and should be champions for the stewardship and healing of the earth. In light of this eco-crisis, my attention to Scripture and my preaching have changed since reading this very timely and important book. You will find the depth of her scholarship compelling, her theological and urgent imperatives to address this eco-crisis convincing, and her illustrative sermons captivating."
— Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

"In the quest to wake up family and friends to the reality of our growing climate crisis, oddly the most effective voices have come from the most unlikely places. With grace, wisdom, and humor, rural Pennsylvania pastor, Dr. Leah D. Schade uses her voice and storytelling skills to address the biggest challenge facing us today. I can't think of a better resource to tackle hope deniers."
— Peterson Toscano, Host of the Climate Stew Podcast

"Environmental issues have become a critically important subject. However, prophetic and practical sermons in this vital area are scarce. Leah Schade, an eco-homilist, attempts to solve this problem as she provides ways for preachers to effectively communicate environmental concerns. *Creation-Crisis Preaching* juxtaposes theology and science effectively, bridging the gap between religion and ecology. The use of theological and scientific language in this book connects earth's problems to heaven's promise. If you are looking for resources and hope during this ecological crisis look no further."
— Wayne E. Croft, St. Paul's Baptist Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania

"Author Leah Schade is a leading theological voice on eco-preaching and has crafted an intriguing ecofeminist model for preaching. She provides an excellent guide to the issues confronting Creation today and examines how preaching can and should engage these concerns. The use of imagery, language, and concrete suggestions brings the Earth and the preacher into dialogue, in challenging and helpful ways. Providing sermon examples makes this book an even more important partner for the conversation."
— Karyn L. Wiseman, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"An excellent resource for pastors who wonder about their role in honoring and caretaking God's creation. Drawing on the Lutheran emphases on theology of the cross and the centrality of the resurrection, Dr. Schade provides both a compelling case for why 'creation-crisis preaching' is necessary, and also a solid guidebook on how to do it. Full of rich imagery, confident truth-telling, and resurrection hope, this book inspires new directions for preaching."
— Michael Scholtes, Prince of Peace Evangelical Church, Bangor, Pennsylvania

"Those who preach in the current era of environmental disasters, toxicity in food and water, and atmospheric carbon overload need *Creation-Crisis Preaching* by Leah Schade. Lacing ecofeminist insight into classic Reformation perspective, Schade guides preachers to name crucifixion in creation, coach resistance to exploitation, and assert resurrection precisely where it seems unlikely. The volume is full of specific strategies and examples. Anyone who wants to preach effectively and with relevance needs this book."
— Gilson A.C. Waldkoenig, Gettysburg Seminary

"Leah Schade is an advocate for the integrity of God's creation and invites preachers into her craft. She combines feminist exegesis, theological reflection and her own passion to help preachers help congregants hear anew God's voice in creation and their role in loving, defending and preserving it. Her creative sermons model preaching techniques that bring creation to voice and leave the hearers pondering the awesome ways of God. A needed and important contribution to homiletics and creation care."
— Amy Reumann, Director, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania

"Leah Schade is to be congratulated. In one volume she has given us current analyses of environmental issues, a robust eco-theology that is informed by her Lutheranism, gender studies, and ecology, as well as examples for addressing the environmental crisis in the public arena and the congregation. An invaluable resource for anyone interested in being the 'persistent widow' against the status quo in the greening of God's good creation."
— Karl Krueger, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"This is one of the most creative books on preaching you will find. Leah Schade draws many strands of theology and homiletics into the orbit of feminism and care for the Earth. She pioneers an interdisciplinary ethic that cries out to be proclaimed. She explores the radical changes necessary for us to address the global crises we face. Her generative reflections on the cross and resurrection invite solidarity with the most vulnerable of Earth's creatures and offer hope that inspires us to action and transformation. The study is punctuated by stories and sermons that illustrate well the proposals she makes. I learned a great deal from this book and I recommended it enthusiastically for teachers and students in preaching, theology, feminism, and environmentalism."
—David Rhoads, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

"By responding to the looming environmental crisis, Leah Schade demonstrates the potential for the renewal of Christian preaching. She shows how an ecologically inspired homiletics enables the voice of the Earth to be heard. She shows how an ecotheology is necessarily a feminist theology. And she shows how this ecofeminist theology opens the pathway to a 'shape-shifting Jesus' who still contains the power to surprise. This is an important book that announces Schade as a desperately needed pastoral and prophetic voice of environmental consciousness."
—Jeffrey W. Robbins, Lebanon Valley College, Author of *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*

"*Creation-Crisis Preaching* provides a dense introduction to the theological and philosophical background on which Rev. Schade builds an argument for a new ecofeminist theology. The book is strongest when she takes that theoretical background and shares with her readers her actual, pulpit-delivered sermons—a wide variety of them, many using the Revised Common Lectionary—that she has delivered in three widely different contexts over recent years, from wealthy suburban Philadelphia, to urban, African-American Philadelphia, to rural, poor, farming-hunting-and-fracking areas of Pennsylvania. By interrupting those sermons with internal commentary, linking the text to the theoretical grounding, she paints examples of how challenging theology can scaffold, build, and direct homily."
—Cricket Eccleston Hunter, Director, Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light

"It is in the interface between two different ecologies (e.g., where a forest interacts with a savannah) that one finds the most abundant and complex life forms. In this creative nexus of ecofeminist theology and homiletics, Schade similarly creates a rich landscape of insight by bringing together things often kept separate. The work provides helpful overviews of pertinent theory in the fields of ecology, homiletics, and gender studies. The author, mindful of producing a practical resource for the church, always suggests real-life applications within the ecological crisis that defines the contemporary church's *kairos* moment. It is an excellent hermeneutical introduction to a serious and neglected 'text' for today's preachers."
— Erik Heen, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"A healthy ecosystem depends upon the interdependent flourishing of its parts. In *Creation-Crisis Preaching* Leah Schade makes a winsome case for the mutually reinforcing contributions of environmentalism and feminism, ecological consciousness and a Lutheran Christian theology of the cross, cycles of nature and the surprising newness of resurrection, homiletical theory and practice. From her experience as an interdisciplinary scholar, a preacher grounded in a local religious community, and an environmental activist, Schade challenges, invites, and inspires others to work that is simultaneously demanding, urgent, and joyful."
— John Hoffmeyer, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"A must-read for all preachers, seminarians and theologians committed to environmental concerns. Richly illustrated with sermons, stories and art, the book offers a pastoral theology of creation from an ecofeminist-Lutheran perspective that is academically well-grounded and practically insightful. As a creative contribution to an eco-Christology readers may find the concepts of eco-crucifixion and eco-resurrection profoundly intriguing and meaningful."
— Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"Rev. Dr. Leah Schade wrestles with the question of preaching truly good news in the face of the bad news of serious anthropogenic ecological disruption. Animated by ecofeminist insight and Lutheran accents on living word and theology of the cross, the book also highlights Schade's distinctive preaching voice. This work will provoke needed conversation about how the life-giving Gospel can be spoken when the Holocene epoch itself is threatened."
— Benjamin W. Stewart, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

"This is a book about proclaiming the cross and resurrection, about Martin Luther's theology of the cross, finding God in the depths of suffering and oppression. Leah Shade has extended that traditional Lutheran emphasis , in our time finding those depths of suffering in the exploitation and debasement of the created world and the systematic oppression of women, a region called ecofeminism. Her exploration of this region is both provocative and stimulating. The book takes its life from her preaching, from imaginative, challenging yet accessible sermons. The cross borne by the created world and women must be proclaimed, faced by all people of faith, if there is to be not reform but resurrection."
— Bob Robinson, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"Rev. Dr. Leah Schade's book *Creation-Crisis Preaching* is the perfect companion for Pope Francis' recently released Encyclical 'Laudato Sii'. Scripture is faithfully reinterpreted thru a 'Green Lens', guiding fallen humanity away from fulfilling the prophecy in Genesis 3:17—'Cursed is Earth because of you'—and back into right relationship with all Creation. Two hundred pages of well-documented, thought-provoking, faith-affirming yet faith-challenging didactic catapults the reader into a hopeful, almost 'Franciscan' perspective."
— William Thwing, past President, Pennsylvania Interfaith
Power and Light

"Dr. Schade does a brilliant job of helping preachers not only to preach toward amelioration of the creation crisis but also of helping them to understand how creation itself literally contributes its voice to proclamation. Schade offers fascinating insights, practical advice, and boldly creative sermons that will be priceless for pastors committed to making a significant difference toward ending the creation crisis. By God's power, this book will help us to avoid catastrophe."
— David Von Schlichten, Seton Hill University

"Norman Wirzba says the environmental crisis demands pastors preach nothing but the doctrine of Creation. Leah Schade provides the theoretical and practical tools needed to do so. Accessibly and with wonderful clarity she inspires as well as instructs on the homiletic challenge before us. One might argue over technical ecological points, but the road she lays out for ministry of Word is one we must travel and she provides a meaningful, coherent and cogent road map."
— Thomas W. Martin, Susquehanna University

"Dr. Schade has done an extraordinary work to help preachers in their attempt to proclaim better care for the environment. In a very interesting and provocative way she draws on ecofeminist theology that recognizes comparisons of how the society has interacted with women and the ecological environment over the centuries. Her understanding of ecology as being that which involves humans and our natural surrounding encourages the preacher to proclaim the 'oneness' that humans and the rest of creation enjoy. Her work embellishes the great scholarship done by other theologians and activists to bring about attention to the dire need for the care and maintaining of a healthier ecological environment. As a skilled homiletician she offers many themes and images to assist preachers in their proclamation. She raises the need for preachers to nurture a greater appreciation and care for the whole of God's creation. Her perspective and approach are very much needed for this present age."
—Charles Leonard, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"Dr. Schade's book is a timely contribution to theology and praxis, to ways of thinking about and responding to the environmental crisis. Meaning of creation and our stupor before the degradation of nature are among her concerns. A timely resource for preachers, naturalists, and anyone concerned with earthy life and ethics, she proclaims a 'word of hope, empowerment, and courage.' It should become required reading for theology students, environmentalists, and the general public."
—Nelson Rivera, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Creation-Crisis Preaching

Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit

Leah D. Schade

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Appendices and study guide can be downloaded for free at: www.creationcrisispreaching.com

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To my children, Rachel and Benjamin. This book is for you, for your children, and your children's children. May it inspire you and the generations who follow to continue the "Great Work" of our time. And may it serve as a witness that while we inherited a broken world for which we are answerable in passing on to you, there were some of us who responded to the call and did all we could to bring about healing, reconciliation and hope.

Foreword

by John S. McClure, Vanderbilt Divinity School

During the week that I began to write this Foreword, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), decided to prove on the floor of Congress that global warming is a false idea dreamed up by an ideologically driven elite. He went out onto the street and brought a snowball into the Senate and spoke about how the unseasonably cold weather outside made a mockery of theories of climate change. Into this highly politicized situation of both willful ignorance and "deer in the headlights" apathy regarding environmental abuse, Leah Schade has penned her new, extremely helpful book, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit*.

In this situation, preachers find that they need help. In the first place, most of us are not experts on climate change, fracking, or many other environmental issues. We know all about biblical criticism, pastoral theology, and denominational polity, but we do not feel competent to engage head-on the many permutations of environmental devastation all around us.

In the second place, we are not certain where to put our oar in the water. Should we preach about the larger issue of care for the environment and our role in that process? Should we become involved in a local environmental campaign and preach out of personal, on-the-ground experience? Should we preach environmental "issue" sermons, or should we layer in a regular set of messages about the environment as the church year or lectionary presents us with the opportunity? Should we develop an environmental "aspect" to our usual theology, or do we need to rethink our entire theological construct so that it is informed by an environmental hermeneutic? Should we draw an ethical "line in the sand" and push for a particular ideological stance, or is it best to move slowly, negotiating an environmental perspective that is responsive to our shared life as followers of Christ?

In the third place, we are not sure of our goals. Are we building a community of environmentalists who will work in unity for change? Are we providing "hints and helps" for daily life that will help each

of us do our part? Are we providing new theological perspectives that might "leaven the loaf" in the public conversation about the environment? Are we operating as public theologians, claiming space for the churches within a larger global movement?

Faced with such complexities, and already absorbed in our own set of congregational and homiletical concerns, many of us simply barrel along with our heads down. We find occasional openings to mention our own commitments and those of our denomination regarding environmental issues. We support Christian education opportunities and forums on environmental topics. And we try to model good environmental habits in our personal and congregational lifestyles.

In the pages of this book, Leah Schade helps us to sort out and address many of the often-debilitating issues listed above. As she does so, she speaks from experiences as a preacher and committed practitioner. As an ordained Lutheran pastor, passionate and skillful preacher, and anti-fracking activist, she speaks "as one with authority" about what it takes to be active and involved in changing the rhetoric used to frame environmental discourse. At the same time, she is a skilled interdisciplinary scholar, deftly integrating Christian social ethics, ecofeminism, Lutheran Christology, and homiletics. In *Creation-Crisis Preaching*, she develops new ways of thinking about preaching and the church's practices of communication in the public arena that are powerful, workable, and potentially game-changing. She encourages preachers to get involved in the difficult business of reframing both public discourse and the church's discourse around environmental issues.

If you are like me, reading this book will both trouble you and leave you hopeful. Instead of incessantly nagging at the reader, convicting us of the many things that we are not doing, the tone of this book is not only positive but *redemptive*. This is because Schade permits theology, and more specifically Christology, to lead the way. Whereas many scholars place their theological focus, quite logically, on the doctrine of Creation, she weaves together hard ecological narratives of political and public abuses of power and privilege with the narrative of Jesus' *life and crucifixion*. At the same time, the book opens up rhetorical and activist possibilities and weaves them together with new understandings of Jesus' *resurrection*. This focus on Christology, and the work of Christ between Good Friday and Easter, is one of the most refreshing and helpful dimensions of the book. As

I read the book, I found myself being educated not only about our environment and its potential devastation, but also about the depth of God's *redemptive* love for the world through Jesus Christ.

Creation-Crisis Preaching is also immensely practical, providing a useful homiletical model for those who desire to preach from a theologically informed ecological perspective. This model holds up under real-world testing, bearing the marks of Schade's own experience as a preacher-activist. Schade is not in favor of the "one-off" school of preaching in which preachers suddenly load up on an unsuspecting congregation. She favors weaving together pastoral theology with activism (or least public commitment). Ultimately, however, her interests are theological and rhetorical. She wants preachers be on the watch for ways to *reclaim the entire discourse around the environment*. In a way similar to the great pastoral theologians of the New Testament, who used ideas and images at hand to shape theological discourse (mustard seeds, finishing a race, judgment and acquittal, etc.), Schade wants preachers to take the stuff of our environmental experience today, consider it carefully theologically, and use it to reframe the entire environmental conversation. She believes that preachers can become the front line in the battle for environmental language and rhetoric.

These are difficult and back-breaking times for the Earth that sustains us. We are surrounded by debates regarding oil pipelines, fracking, climate change, emissions control, "clean coal," and so on. In this potentially apocalyptic situation, Schade sounds an urgent call for better theological reflection and ethical forms of worship and preaching that include both the difficult naming of the sinful reality of ecological violence, and the claiming of a redemptive pathway forward. In my opinion, this book represents a milestone in the field of homiletics – heralding a new generation of ecologically informed preaching. I have learned much from Leah Schade, and I am sure that you will as well.

Introduction

Why Creation Needs Good Preaching, and Good Preaching Needs Creation

The old adage for preachers, paraphrased from a quotation by Karl Barth, is that we should preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.[1] As I have opened my local newspaper, *The Daily Item* ("Serving the Central Susquehanna [Pennsylvania] Valley since 1937"), each day since 2011, I have been struck by the increasing number of articles that directly address or simply mention some environmental issue. Central Pennsylvania is a politically conservative, small-town, agrarian, blue-collar, Republican, conservative Christian area of the state. It is certainly no bastion of flaming-green, tree-hugging liberalism. Yet more and more articles, editorials, and op-eds address environmental topics: from climate change to hydraulic fracturing; from climate refugees to intersexed and cancerous fish in the river; from shuttered coal plants to disputed natural gas pipelines—all samplings of issues that regularly make headlines. National newspapers, news magazines, and online news venues carry similar articles and reports on the environment. The news is rarely positive.

Contamination of drinking water, air pollution, loss of species and habitat, and catastrophic weather events due to climate change have implications for every human being on this planet. Yet how often do clergy address environmental issues in their sermons? If you are a religious leader who regularly preaches in a congregation, how many times have you mentioned environmental issues in your preaching in the past year? If you regularly attend worship services as part of a congregation, how many times in the last six months have you heard a sermon that spoke about ecological issues?

According to research conducted by Lifeway, a Christian nonprofit organization, "The majority of Protestant pastors (52%) address environmental issues once a year or less… Eleven percent say they never speak to their church members about the environment."[2] Only 25 percent say they speak on the subject several times a year, and

a mere 12 percent say they address the issue at least once a month. In addition, a 2014 survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and the Academy of Religion (AAR) indicated that "most Americans who attend religious services at least once or twice a month hear little from their clergy leader about the issue of climate change. Just over one-third of Americans say their clergy leader speaks about climate change often (11%) or sometimes (25%). More than 6-in-10 Americans say their clergy leader rarely (29%) or never (33%) references climate change."[3]

Given this reticence in addressing environmental issues from the pulpit, it is not surprising that a recent study by sociologist John M. Clements, et al., finds that between 1993 and 2010 there is "no clear evidence of a greening of Christianity among rank-and-file Christians in the general public."[4] Even more troubling in their findings is the fact that Christians today actually have less regard for ecological issues than those who practice no religion. According to Clements, after seven years of the repeated assertion by a few religious leaders that Creation care is not only consistent with, but in fact is demanded by Christian values, "Overall, mainline (and evangelical) Protestants still reported lower levels of environmental concern than did non-Christians and nonreligious respondents."[5]

This stagnation in ecological concern and the corresponding dearth in environmental sermons do not bode well for Creation, nor do they speak well of contemporary preaching. As Lynn White's prescient essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" made clear over forty years ago, the dire state of the world's ecological systems is due in large part to disastrous Jewish and Christian theological interpretations of biblical texts that promote humanity's domination over Earth.[6] According to White, humans are experiencing an ecological backlash due to the profoundly negative way our interpretations of Scripture have affected our environment.[7] In addition, war, industrialization, agriculture,[8] deforestation, the burning of fossil fuels, overpopulation, and pollution have all combined to "foul the nest," and threaten not only our species' survival but the survival of every other species on Earth as well.

This book, then, begins with two premises: (1) there is a dire need for all Creation, inclusive of humanity, to hear the Good News of the Christian faith in this age of planetary environmental devastation; (2) contemporary Christian preaching, if it is to be responsible to one of the primary justice issues of our time, and if it is to be relevant in the

lives of our hearers, must address Creation care on a regular basis. Stated in a more positive way, there is enormous potential for the renewal of Christian preaching, the Church, and Creation through an effort to include Creation both as subject within, and "listener" of, our sermons.

Yet preaching good news in the face of environmental devastation, the climate crisis, extreme energy extraction, and the related issues of economic injustice can feel overwhelming to pastor and congregation alike. Catherine Keller describes the problem this way:

> [W]arnings of social, economic, ecological, or nuclear disaster have become so numbingly normal that they do not have the desired effect on most of us, who retreat all the more frantically into private pursuits… How can we sustain resistance to destruction without expecting to triumph? That is, how can we acknowledge the apocalyptic dimensions of the late-modern situation in which we find ourselves entrenched without either clinging to some millennial hope of steady progress or then, flipping, disappointed, back to pessimism?[9]

Especially for the preacher, the dual temptations either to legalistically preach about "saving the earth" or to irresponsibly encourage waiting passively for a messianic solution can lead to an "apocalyptic either/or logic—if we can't save the world, then to hell with it. Either salvation or damnation."[10]

This book will explore ways to preach through this double-bind in environmental sermons that are equally pastoral and prophetic. The goal of this book is to help religious leaders develop an environmentally literate approach to preaching that honestly and creatively names the reality of our ecologically violated world, while emphasizing God's activity in bringing hope and restoration. More specifically, this book articulates a *Lutheran ecofeminist Christology* that probes the meaning of Jesus' life, crucifixion, and resurrection in light of the dual oppression and destruction of women and Earth, and then provides a *homiletical model* for how to preach from this standpoint.

For a Christian, any "issue preaching" must bring us to the person of Jesus Christ and what his ministry, preaching, teaching, healing, miracles, death, and resurrection mean for the very real bodies of human beings, animals, plants, and even Earth itself. Because I am a Lutheran, I am particularly keen to discover how ecofeminist

theology squares with the *theology of the cross*. I firmly believe in the Lutheran conviction that God is found in the very place where we are least likely to look—the apparently God-forsaken place of the cross. I will argue that, in this day and age, God is found particularly within what might be identified as an *eco-crucifixion* that is going on all around us, felt most keenly by women and their families. Because I am a Lutheran homiletician, I am compelled to find a way to preach the *eco-resurrection*, even when most signs indicate that Good Friday may be the fate of our planet.

Eco-Crucifixion and Eco-Resurrection?

Why use the term *eco-crucifixion*? Some may take offense in my using a strongly Christian symbol—indeed, the preeminent Christian symbol—to describe what is happening to Earth. I recognize that my use of this term may be interpreted as an attempt to Christianize the environmental crisis. My work among interfaith grassroots environmental groups has sensitized me to this issue. Christians, too, may resent such a co-opting of this symbol that is deeply spiritual and carries so much personal and communal meaning. Hence, I do not use this term flippantly or without caution. Rather, this word choice arises out of my understanding of what constituted Jesus' crucifixion: the torture and death of an innocent being for the purpose of strengthening and furthering the power of what Walter Wink calls the "domination system."[11] I see a direct parallel to what is happening to Earth and women, for which preaching will play a key role in illustrating.

I draw support for this idea of a crucified Earth from the work of Mark Wallace, who makes the case that the "cruciform Spirit" embodied in and through Earth suffers just as Jesus did on the cross, this time under the continual siege of "ecological sin." (This will be more fully explicated in Chapter 7.) Wallace warns of a "permanent trauma to the divine life itself" through the crucifixion-like ecocide that humans continually inflict upon Earth and its inhabitants.[12] His powerful equating of God's suffering through Jesus on the cross with God's suffering through the embodied Spirit in Earth is meant to spur "a conversion of the heart to a vision of a green earth, where all persons live in harmony with their natural environments . . . [and] work toward a seamless social-environmental ethic of justice and love toward all of God's creatures."[13]

What is missing in Wallace's analogy, however, is the resurrection. In fact, as we will note in the chapters ahead, the resurrection is curiously absent from the work of many ecological and ecofeminist theologians, leading to what a Lutheran might identify as a kind of environmental "works righteousness," wherein we mistakenly believe there is something we as humans can do to earn salvation – ours or this planet's. Because of the enormity of the environmental problems facing Earth and its inhabitants, and the full burden of ecological sin that rests squarely on the shoulders of humanity, the task of healing and liberating both Earth and women can seem overwhelming, especially if we rely solely on our human capacity to turn things around and effect change. Thus a question to explore is the degree to which Lutheranism can dialogue with ecofeminism and expand not just the concept of the crucifixion, but our understanding of the power of God in the resurrection. When we have witnessed instances of environmental devastation, the term *eco-crucifixion* may be appropriate to describe the experience of the kind of death we are seeing and experiencing planet-wide. At the same time, we will also spend a good deal of time discussing what it means to proclaim an *eco-resurrection* that arises through God's grace.

"Nature" or "Creation"?

While we are on the subject of terminology, let's take a moment to clarify how I will be referring to the natural world. *Nature* is the term used within a scientific framework that utilizes an explanatory model based on empirical data. In contrast, *Creation* is a theological term used within a religious framework to denote that which is *created* by God. This is not to say that there is a mutually exclusive dichotomy between the two terms, or that one is to be privileged over the other. Rather, the theological term of Creation builds upon the empirically observable phenomenon of nature and "functions within Christianity as an axiological claim [as] the moral and aesthetic point of the symbolically mediated relationship between creation and nature."[14] As W. David Hall explains, "[T]he fundamental significance of the idea of creation is that the universe is invested with value, that is, creation is good, and that this value makes a claim on us."[15] Hall affirms that both the scientific term *nature* and the theological term *creation* are valid and have their place in human understanding of the world, but they should not be confused and folded into one another.

What the concept of Creation gives us is "a buttress against the tendencies toward devaluation within anthropocentrism" that can, in turn, contribute to both an ecological and comprehensive ethic.[16] As Hall explains: "The Christian view of the world is one of a realm invested with value and a proper object of respect because it is the creation of a good and perfect deity. This recognition of the world as a realm of value says important things about the place of humanity and human use of the world."[17] What the biblical narrative tells us is that "humans have the capacity to take a consciously responsible attitude toward the nonhuman world. Indeed, it is this capability to be consciously oriented in the world that makes ecological ethics a possibility."[18]

Thus, I generally use the term *Creation* instead of *nature*. Obviously when quoting or referring to the works of other ecotheologians who use these terms interchangeably, I will use their terminology. But for my purposes, I will heed Hall's admonishment to use the theological term for the world—*Creation*. In addition, I make the decision to capitalize the word so as to denote the level of respect I am affording the other-than-human world as a *subject* rather than object. I will do the same with the term "Earth" when addressing it as an entity (as opposed to lowercase *earth*, which is a synonym of *soil*). Capitalizing the term indicates that this is an entity with a name and worthy of such. This will be especially important when considering how both Earth and Creation are each a subject and "character" in the biblical narrative, and thus in preaching.

Creation Care: The Messenger, the Message, and the Mode of Delivery

The work of Clements and his associates on the lack of "greening" among Christians in America supports my assertion that preaching has a role to play in raising the level of environmental consciousness among Christians. They note that as the greening trend among Christian leaders and organizations deepens and broadens, they expect to see a measurable shift in the level of environmental concern among Christians.[19] The researchers suggest:

> [S]cholars may perform a series of experiments designed to systematically examine those factors expected to facilitate or inhibit the diffusion of green Christianity from religious leaders and organizations to rank-and-file members. Essential

> here may be three characteristics: *the messenger, the message, and the mode of delivery* [emphasis mine]. For instance, who is more influential in changing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of rank-and-file Christians: the leader of their local congregation or a well-known national Christian spokesperson? How do different characteristics of the message content matter (e.g., the use of Holy Scripture, the invocation of different values, etc.)? Finally, how does the effectiveness of a message to embrace green Christianity vary depending on its mode of delivery: in a church newsletter, *in a homily* [emphasis mine], via Bible study, etc.?[20]

My book responds to the last question by contending that sermons (or homilies) can indeed enhance the effectiveness of the message to embrace green Christianity. Research from the 2014 PRRI/AAR survey on religion, values, and climate change confirms this assertion, in that "Americans who say their clergy leader speaks at least occasionally about climate change also score higher on the Climate Change Concern Index. More than 6-in-10 Americans who report hearing about climate change from their clergy leader at least occasionally are very (38%) or somewhat (24%) concerned about climate change, compared to approximately 4-in-10 (39%) Americans who attend congregations where the issue is rarely or never raised."[21]

Given the fact that the majority of religious leaders do not address environmental issues in their sermons more than a few times a year (if at all), it may be that what is needed are models and frameworks to help preachers craft sermons that are informed by an environmental hermeneutic, consistent with ecological theology, attentive to the context of their hearers, and creatively inspired to include the "voice" of Creation within preaching. This book aims to offer just that. More specifically, I insist that environmental preaching intentionally incorporate the joint and interrelated oppression of women and Creation if it is to be faithful to Jesus' command to tend to "the least of these" on our planet. Thus this book offers the unique lens of ecofeminist Christology through which to interpret both Scripture and the environmental context of our time.

The Case for an Ecofeminist Homiletic

How does ecofeminist theology connect with the discipline of homiletics? Just as the field of justice and ethics preaching has

recently seen the development of homiletics from the standpoints of traditionally underrepresented and unheard constituencies (the disabled, Native Americans, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender persons, victims of sexual violence, and so on), so I believe the time has come for the ecofeminist voice, speaking with and alongside Earth and women, to take its place within the theory and praxis of preaching. My hope is that by bringing together the disciplines of homiletics, ecology, and gender studies in the spirit of interdisciplinary scholarly practice, a conversation will begin that sparks ongoing collaboration. Certainly this mutual engagement will lead us to points of tension and controversy (which will be discussed in these pages). Nevertheless, I make the case that by bringing the approach of ecofeminist theology to the field of homiletics, both preachers and ecofeminists will mutually benefit—and will be mutually challenged.[22]

For example, the holistic, healing, and prophetic work of ecofeminism will reach a larger, wider, and theologically grounded audience through the preaching of clergy committed to its principles. At the same time, ecofeminist theology will be challenged to more deeply reflect on theological tenets that thus far have been underdeveloped so that it may more profoundly resonate with people of faith. The discipline of homiletics, by the same token, will find its praxis enriched and better equipped to speak to the contemporary questions of the ecological crisis by paying attention to this particular intersection of women and the environment. Thus it is preaching that stands at the center point of the crossroads of church and society, as well as science and religion, always finding ways to create dialogue between theology and the world in which theology can bring discernment, understanding, and hope. As Richard Lischer states:

> Preaching functions as a corrective of theology. When theology moves toward synthesis with its dialogue partners of other disciplines, preaching recalls for it its character as *theo*-logy, reflection on God. When theology becomes preoccupied with the symmetry of its own system or the cogency of its method, preaching reminds it of the catastrophic core of judgment and grace that called theology into being.[23]

Ultimately, my aim is to begin a mutual engagement between ecofeminism and homiletics that results in "sustained intellectual exchange that includes informed and detailed debate," which may enable us to become a more "productive scholarly community."[24]

Some may wonder if there is a need for an ecofeminist Christology within preaching and homiletics. A brief glance at the bibliography at the end of this book will demonstrate that, in fact, there has been very little attention paid to ecotheological concerns within either the academy or mainstream preaching publications. At the very least, I believe the claim can be made that the connection to ecotheology is in its nascent stage,[25] and that attention to ecofeminist theology within homiletic circles does not yet exist. Many of the homiletic resources addressing environmental concerns contain sermons and essays affirming that Earth and its other-than-human creatures have rights, deserve respect, and should be treated as equal partners in God's Peaceable Community.[26] Yet none of them specifically address the intersection of feminist and ecological issues from a homiletical perspective. I believe this to be a fundamental oversight within these monographs.

For example, take the otherwise fine volume *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary,*[27] a collection of essays that connect biblical scholarship with ecological theology for the purpose of designing worship and sermons around the recently initiated "Season of Creation," a three-year lectionary cycle made up of twelve Sundays that seeks to connect congregations with Creation. In this book, some of the hermeneutical essays employ the metaphors of earth-as-mother, earth as giving birth to humanity, and earth as experiencing labor pains, while other essays mention the need for ecojustice in preaching. However, completely overlooked is the opportunity to connect ecojustice issues to the specific plight of women, and to trace the oppression of Earth to that of the patriarchal oppression of women.

In fact, in his essay on "Humanity Sunday," Norman Habel repeatedly assigns blame for our world's eco-crisis to the generalized concept of anthropocentrism without taking into account the ecofeminist argument that it is not necessarily human-centeredness that is the problem. Ecofeminists such as Wendy Lynne Lee point out that the notion of humans being able to decenter themselves is rather illogical, since centeredness is an "ineradicable feature of human consciousness."[28] Lee argues that "human-centeredness is not the enemy of environmental responsibility, but its most vital ally."[29] It is, rather, androcentrism, and particularly male chauvinism, that is at the root of the hubristic belief that males were created to rule and dominate not just nature, but those whom they deem to be lowest

in the hierarchy, namely females. Thus it is the phenomenon of male dominance that "produces particular *patterns* of environmental destruction, nonhuman animal exploitation and cruelty, and social injustice," which ecotheologians such as Habel and others are either ignorant of, overlook, or simply ignore.[30] I argue that the silence within ecotheology and in the pulpit on this aspect of male domination and patriarchal aggression toward God's Creation and women must be corrected. This book aligns with Lee's assertion that the task of "an ecologically inspired feminism [is] to identify these patterns, spell out their place in the logic, and dispel the illusion of their naturalness and/or divine sanction."[31]

A Theology of Preaching for an Eco-Homiletic

Before we begin to explore the possibilities for developing an ecofeminist Christology for preaching, I must articulate how I understand the task of preaching and its relevance to contemporary questions and issues. Influenced by Lutheran theology, I work with the understanding that "[i]t is supremely through the words of the preacher that the Word of God in the Scriptures is made alive in the present."[32] Further, "[T]he Word of God spoken is itself the Word of God in preaching or God's own speech to us. Thus preaching has a dual aspect: divine activity and human activity, God's Word and human speech."[33] This dual function of preaching will be reflected in my development of an ecofeminist theology for preaching. I will emphasize both the human activity of the preacher who takes the suffering of women and Earth into consideration when proclaiming God's Word, as well as God's action of calling people to awareness, repentance, and hope in the midst of ecological despair. As well, the proclamation of what *God* is doing to bring about an eco-resurrection will be a key feature of this type of preaching.

What is the role of preaching in the community? L. Susan Bond notes, "Preaching is a sacramental activity that makes Christ present to the community… Preaching is nothing more and nothing less than the invocation of the dangerous memory, the subversive presence, and the transformed future of the God we know in Jesus/Christ."[34] Similarly, Lischer states, "Preaching is the church giving voice to its experience of God's salvation."[35] This process goes hand-in-hand with theological reflection on the significance of God's Word for the world. Lischer points out, however, that such proclamation must be engaged with other dialogue partners: "Beyond the preacher's pastoral

experiences lies theology's perennial dialogue with psychotherapy, anthropology, philosophy, ideology, politics, the arts, science, medicine, cybernetics, and ethics. This dialogue not only informs preaching; it makes it possible—and intelligible."[36] He explains that the sermon brings together a confluence of the disciplines of "exegesis, biblical theology, systematics, dogmatics, symbolics, apologetics, history, comparative religion, practical theology, liturgy, the wisdom of the nontheological disciplines, [and] the experience and personality of the minister… It is a fragment, a moment in the whole, yet contains the whole."[37] This will be evident in developing approaches to Creation-crisis preaching in which the sermon may be thought of as a kind of synecdoche—one small instance of the proclamation of God's Word to the world in which the whole of its universal and particular significance is present.

I make the argument that it is possible to defend a commitment to preaching that is responsible to the gospel while also being responsive to ecofeminist theology. Further, I contend that the preacher's attention to ecofeminist theology is not merely an imposition of external ideological concerns on the Church's proclamation. Rather, it arises out of, and is a natural extension of, the gospel's concern for "the least of these" and the Good News about the coming of God's Peaceable Community. I am particularly interested in creating a dialogue within the area of justice and ethics preaching between ecofeminist theology and homileticians.

Most importantly, this project will emphasize a Lutheran understanding of preaching—not just the cross, but also the resurrection, for "only because of the resurrection does Christian preaching assume the significance and importance so desperately claimed for it… [A] Christian theology of the cross, no matter how poignant and realistic it is in its description of the Crucified One, cannot stop short of resurrection."[38] It is the promise of the resurrection that gives the commission and power to preach, observes Lischer.[39] I will build on that premise and make the argument that a proclamation of the resurrection for the sake of Creation and women is a subject that has not been sufficiently explored within homiletics. Therefore, this project offers another voice and range of issues to consider within the discipline of homiletics that will extend work already done, while expanding preaching in ways that are relevant to contemporary concerns for the joint rights of women and Earth.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the "river" of the environmental movement in the United States and shows how ecological theology naturally springs forth from the environmental movement, particularly as it has emerged out of my own Lutheran tradition. This chapter will also explore the fertile soil of the interpretation of Scripture through an ecological lens and offer a way of preaching that enables the voice of Earth to be heard.

Chapter 2 asks, What are possible strategies for approaching an ecological homiletic? It begins by consulting social movement theory and examines the role of religion—specifically, the function of preaching—within the environmental movement. At the same time, we begin to see how the social movement theory concepts of framing, meaning construction, and the rhetoric of change can provide a means by which to understand and analyze our Creation-crisis preaching. The second part of the chapter offers three approaches for preaching drawn from the stages of a deciduous tree: *consciousness-raising* (flowering), *call for action* (leafing), and *sustainable change* (fruiting). The purpose is to offer an analytical framework for understanding the preacher's intention for particular sermons, the discursive and rhetorical devices used to accomplish the sermon's goal, and criteria by which to measure the sermon's effectiveness. This section provides preachers with ways to think about their own creative, rhetorical, and performative strategies for ecotheological preaching. A sermon illustrating these very notions concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3 offers guidelines for preachers to situate themselves at the intersection of their local eco-habitat and institutional nexuses of business, government, society, and culture. This eco-location for preaching is in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" By surveying our landscapes and extending the concept of "neighbor" to our Earth-kin and to those entities that connect to each other in biotic, social, and spiritual ways, we can begin mapping our neighbors. This chapter will be buttressed by the work of four key homileticians—Rebecca Chopp, Lucy Atkinson Rose, Anna Carter Florence, and John McClure—to support this mapping of the other-than-human neighbors in our midst. Each provides important theoretical concepts to undergird Creation-crisis preaching. The chapter also includes two sermons to give concrete examples of contextual green preaching.

Chapter 4 brings the concepts of ecofeminist theology into conversation with preaching. The chapter begins with an overview of

ecofeminist theology, its emphases, and its principles—which include critiques of patriarchy, hierarchy, instrumentalism, dualism, and "othering." It also provides a critical examination of the associations that people make between women and nature. The chapter concludes with initial implications of ecofeminism's impact on the practice of preaching. Here we see John McClure's concept of "exiting" as particularly helpful in connecting ecofeminism with homiletics.

This ecofeminist homiletic is developed around the focal point of Christology in chapter 5 that includes an artistic rendering of Jesus by Anthony DiLorenzo, which I have titled "Sophia-Mer-Christ." The image provides the frame for a Christology that addresses the intersection of women and Earth within a shape-shifting Jesus. This chapter will also examine a feminist theology of the cross developed by Mary Solberg to provide the foundation for an ecofeminist Christology. Celia Deane-Drummond's theology of evolution will round out the implications of Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection for an ecofeminist Christology that is infused with wisdom and wonder.

Chapter 6 draws on the motif of the shape-shifting "trickster" to add yet another perspective to ecological theology and the ecofeminist Christology developed in the previous chapter. The goal is to provide an expansive way to think about preaching Jesus's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, while also moving our conceptions of nature beyond that of passive recipient or docile victim of abuse. Utilizing Charles Campbell's and Johan Cilliers' homiletical notion of "preaching fools," this chapter challenges us to find creative ways to proclaim the hidden power of God that surprises us with justice and hope. Two sermons are included in this chapter. One illustrates the image of Jesus as the shape-shifting "gardener" on Easter morning. The other is a more prophetic sermon proclaiming the risen Christ in a community destroyed by fracking and its related industries.

The final chapter begins by outlining the guiding principles that shape an ecotheological homiletic for preaching informed by ecofeminist principles, and offers a trilogy of sermons informed by these criteria and principles. Each sermon is "preached" from the perspective of one of the other-than-human characters in the biblical narrative. The sermons are each preceded by an explication of the eco-hermeneutic used for the biblical texts and are followed by an explanation of how the principles of ecofeminist theology were applied. This chapter will help to demonstrate what is possible for

homiletic theory and praxis incorporating the values of ecotheology and ecofeminism. The concluding argument of the book is that by using an ecofeminist theology of the cross and resurrection, we will be addressing the needs of the world in terms of justice and ethics, making our preaching more relevant, and offering the proclamation of the gospel in a uniquely contextual and life-giving way.

Notes

[1]"Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible." Karl Barth, quoted in *Time* magazine ("Barth in Retirement," May 31, 1963). See http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,896838,00.html, accessed May 11, 2015.

[2]Mark Kelly, "Lifeway Research Studies Global Warming Beliefs among Protestant Pastors" (April 16, 2009), accessed July 13, 2014, http://www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-studies-global-warming-beliefs-among-Protestant-pastors. According to the website, "The phone survey sampled randomly selected Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called and responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Protestant churches. The completed sample of 1,002 phone interviews provides a 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed ±3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups."

[3]Robert P. Jones, Daniel Cox, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, *Believers, Sympathizers, and Skeptics: Why Americans Are Conflicted About Climate Change, Environmental Policy, and Science: Findings from the PRRI/AAR Religion, Values, and Climate Change Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Public Religion Research Institute and American Academy of Religion, 2014), 4.

[4]John M. Clements, Aaron M. McCright, Chenyang Xiao, "An Examination of the 'Greening of Christianity'Thesis among Americans, 1993-2010, " *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53:2 (2014): 373.

[5]Ibid., 388.

[6]Lynn Townsend White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967).

[7]There are, of course, other contributions to our current ecological crisis that will be discussed in the next chapter, in which I critically engage White's thesis. What is significant about his proposal, however, is that it is the first time religion is indicted as a major contributor to the ethical failings that have led to the current state of our planet.

[8]White made no distinctions between different types of agriculture in his critique. It must be noted that co-op and family farms committed to organic, chemical-free and humane agriculture and animal husbandry are very different from "factory farms," monoculture, and industrialized agriculture.

[9]Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 14.

[10]Ibid.

[11]See Walter Wink's *The Powers* trilogy, especially *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

[12]Mark I. Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2005), 129.

[13]Ibid., 136.

[14]W. David Hall, "Does Creation Equal Nature? Confronting the Christian Confusion About Ecology and Cosmology, " *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 73, no. 3 (September 2005): 784.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 806.

[18]Ibid., 808.

[19]Clements, "An Examination of the 'Greening of Christianity,'" 389.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Jones, Robert P., *Believers, Sympathizers, and Skeptics,* 4.

[22]Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, in their field of sociolinguistics, have advocated for an "interdisciplinary community of scholarly practice" in their particular area of language and gender studies. Their insights apply to my own project of bringing ecofeminist theology and homiletical theory into conversation for the purpose of mutual enrichment. See: Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnel-Ginet, "Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender and Power All Live," in *Language and Gender: A Reader*, ed. Jennifer Coates (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).

[23]Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel*, rev. ed. (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 9.

[24]Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, "Communities of Practice," 493.

[25]It is notable that there has been a marked increase in the number of essays and articles that address ecological issues in preaching journals and papers presented in the Academy of Homiletics beginning in 2007. While there are certainly a number of factors influencing this uptick, it is worth noting that the widely viewed documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, about former Vice President Al Gore's campaign to bring global climate change to the world's attention, was released the previous year, in 2006. There are also several websites indicating that individual congregations, religious bodies, and worldwide faith groups have begun to embrace the tenets of ecotheology and religious environmentalism. For example, there is the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology; "Many Heavens, One Earth," an event organized by the United Nations and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), designed to promote environmental evangelism among people of faith—the largest international gathering of its kind; Regeneration Project's Interfaith Power and Light campaign; and the Jewish Climate Change Campaign. There are also some web-based resources that offer examples of ecologically themed sermons. Three examples of these websites include: www.letallcreationpraise.org, www.interfaithpowerandlight.org, and www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.

[26]This term, "God's Peaceable Community," is a variation on the phrase, "God's Peaceable Kingdom," the title of artist Edward Hick's famous 1826 painting of Isaiah 11:6–8.

[27]Norman C. Habel, David Rhodes, and H. Paul Santmire, eds., *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

[28]Wendy Lynne Lee, "Restoring Human-Centeredness to Environmental Conscience: The Ecocentrist's Dilemma, the Role of Heterosexualized Anthropomorphizing, and the Significance of Language to Ecological Feminism," *Ethics and the Environment* 14, no. 1 (2009): 29.

[29]Ibid., 41.

[30]Wendy Lynne Lee, *Contemporary Feminist Theory and Activism: Six Global Issues* (Ontario, Can.: Broadview Books, 2010), 196.

[31]Ibid., 196.

[32]Dennis Ngien, "Theology of Preaching in Martin Luther, " *Themelios* 28.2, Spring 2003 (accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/themelios/luther_ngien.pdf).

[33]Ibid.

[34]L. Susan Bond, *Trouble with Jesus* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 150.

[35]Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching,* 79.

[36]Ibid., 9.

[37]Ibid., 15.

[38]Ibid, 16, 19.

[39]Ibid., 21.

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Environmental, Theological, and Biblical Foundations

"Living water" will be a recurring theme throughout this book, both in terms of scriptural references and regarding the very real need for clean water for all living things. Water also provides the underlying metaphor for this chapter on environmental, theological and biblical foundations for Creation-crisis preaching. Recognizing that "living water" is only as healthy as the ecosystem through which it flows, we begin by examining the foundations that undergird and inform our "green" preaching: the environmental movement, ecological theology and a "green" hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture. Part One of this chapter will present a brief overview of the environmental movement, including a basic review of its history, followed by a closer view of where the movement is today—often called the "fourth wave" of environmentalism. Specifically, I will discuss Michael Zimmerman's analysis of the divergence between "reform environmentalists" and "radical ecologists," as well as his suggestion of ecofeminism as a viable response to critiques of deep ecology.

In Part Two, ecological theology naturally "bubbles up" around the environmental movement, allowing for discussion of how the two intersect and mix, especially regarding their critiques of those aspects of society that have led to the eco-crisis we currently face. The concentration will be on examining Lynn White's now-famous essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," which implicated the Judeo-Christian tradition as a main contributor to our ecological ills. This will be followed by a focus on ecotheology within American

Lutheranism over the past fifty years, particularly regarding the work of H. Paul Santmire.

Part Three will follow an important stream within the field of religion and ecology—that of eco-hermeneutics for Scripture. This will be prefaced with a hermeneutical framework based on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Following will be the work of Norman Habel and Dieter Hessel, which provides the eco-hermeneutic for developing a way of preaching that enables the voice of Earth to be heard.

Part One: A Brief Overview of "the River" of the Environmental Movement

The Susquehanna River of central Pennsylvania is not just important to the state's and our country's history. It is also part of my personal history. I have fished its waters for catfish and bass, explored several of the creeks that feed into it, and paid attention to the way it has been used (and misused) for human consumption, agriculture, recreation, travel, energy, and commerce over the last four decades. Ask someone to identify on a map where the Susquehanna ends, and she will easily point to the Chesapeake Bay. But ask where it begins, and the answer is not so clear. With both a West and North Branch, it is difficult to say where the river actually starts. If you look at a satellite view you will see that the lines of the two branches come together into one larger confluence, which then flows through the southern part of the state and empties into the Bay in Maryland. The farther upstream you follow these branches, you see that they split into a multitude of creeks and streams, all branching out across the landscape like the roots of a tree.

Like a river whose many tributaries defy the marking of a definitive beginning, the exact start of the environmental movement in the United States evades precise pinpointing.[1] From a bird's-eye view of history, one may identify numerous contributors to modern-day environmentalism. The conservation movement of the late 1800s, led by figures such as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Gifford Pinchot, and Theodore Roosevelt, raised to public consciousness the need to protect natural areas, either for recreation, "wise use," or preservation of their pristine state.[2] Scientific knowledge and technological development during that time also exercised a great influence on environmental consciousness, for good and for ill. For example, there was simultaneously the ability of human beings to

create synthetic chemicals that threaten biological life at all levels (grimly described in Rachel Carson's seminal book *Silent Spring* [1962]), and greater study and understanding of how chemicals affect human and ecological health. Similarly, technological developments in fossil fuel extraction led to all manner of pollution and political strife worldwide. All the while, these forms of energy gave human beings the ability to travel the globe and even fly to the moon and see this precious, fragile blue and green orb in the context of the vastness of space, providing human beings a new means and perspective to appreciate its wonders.

In the 1970s several events occurred and issues arose that indicated that a true movement around ecological and environmental issues was afoot.[3] The proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as nuclear power plants and their attending risks of disasters and radioactive fallout, were the impetus behind the start of international organizations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. Concerns about population explosion and the ability of the planet to sustain life under such a heavy consumptive burden became part of the public conversation. Species extinction, endangerment, and loss of habitat, together with concerns about pollution, acid rain, and global warming, led to international conferences, policy decisions, and popular events such as Earth Day, which all concentrated on protecting and preserving both human and other-than-human life. Today, there are several trends in ecology and environmental science that have raised a heightened sense of urgency, including studies of overpopulation, resource and energy use, and the climate crisis.

Christopher Rootes describes the evolution of the environmental movement as a progression from conservation (e.g., hunters concerned with protecting habitat for game) to preservation (e.g., those concerned about protecting environments for the spiritual and aesthetic relationship between humans and nature) to "reform environmentalism,"which recognizes that "humankind is part of nature and that the health of human populations is intimately bound up with the health of ecosystems."[4] As ecology became an academic discipline, environmentalism became more a part of mainstream discourse, yet it did not usually undertake extensive analysis of the social or religious origins of environmental problems. According to Rootes, the modern environmental movement in the past fifty years was built upon six conditions: (1) increasing understanding of environmental impacts; (2) increase of the

extent of higher education leading to greater public awareness; (3) increasingly effective technology; (4) the mass media; (5) the critique of consumerist capitalism; and (6) an emphasis on the systemic sources of environmental problems.[5] Key actors during this evolution were the New Left (which quickly disintegrated after the 1970s), student movements, and the Green parties that arose in Europe in the 1970s. Protests against toxic industrial waste as well as nuclear waste eventually led to the development of the environmental justice movement. Groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were emblematic of these movements.

The environmental movement first came to widespread public consciousness on Earth Day in 1970. That first event, "in which 20 million Americans participated in a wide variety of actions designed to highlight environmental issues, can be seen both as the culmination of the environmental critique that developed during the 1960s and as a critical point in the transition toward the institutionalization of environmentalism in the US."[6] Since that time, we have entered what Rootes calls the "fourth wave" of the environmental movement. Deep ecology, part of this fourth wave, "starts from the proposition that all living things are part of a single natural system in which no part is of more intrinsic value than any other."[7] Unlike its anthropocentric predecessors in the environmental movement, deep ecology is "resolutely ecocentric even to the point of hostility to humankind as the perpetrator of greatest damage to other elements of the ecosystem."[8]

Another strand within the fourth wave has been environmental justice, which raised awareness of environmental racism. Activists within this part of the movement connect the "brown" issues of pollution, toxic waste, and public health to the poorest communities (which are usually populated with people of color), which have no recourse to resist this kind of public health oppression imposed on them.[9] Sociologist Robert D. Bullard, for example, has documented the way in which government and business elites in the United States have targeted black communities for polluting industries, municipal landfills, and toxic-waste dumps, even while these enterprises are touted as job-creators for these impoverished communities. This results in lax enforcement of pollution standards and environmental regulations, even while health risks to workers and residents increase.[10]

Ecofeminism, yet another strand in the fourth wave of environmentalism,

> has emphasized the special affinity between women and women's roles in society and interests in environmental protection… [E]cofeminism has developed principally as a critical discourse within environmental philosophy and has given rise to few and relatively small organizations in Western industrialized countries. In such less-industrialized countries as India and Kenya women have played important roles in environmental activism.[11]

Finally, Rootes identifies ecotheology as the newest and perhaps fastest growing strand of environmentalism in the United States, where "it is invoked as a critique of the previously dominant Christian view that human domination over the natural world was divinely ordained and justified unlimited human exploitation of the natural environment."[12] Before exploring ecotheology in detail, some space must be devoted to understanding a critical distinction between reform environmentalists and radical ecologists, because this will provide an important template upon which to place ecotheology.

Fourth Wave Environmentalism: Reform Environmentalists and Radical Ecologists

In his book *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity,* Michael Zimmerman describes a critical divergence within environmentalism—that of "radical ecologists" from "reform environmentalists." According to Zimmerman, "reform environmentalists" are much more conservative and anthropocentric in their views. For example, they may seek to reduce pollution and promote "wise use" of natural resources, but stop short of calling for fundamental change in society's instrumentalist view of nature, wherein nature is seen as a means to an end to satisfy human needs, wants, and profits.[13] In contrast, radical ecologists insist that "unless far-reaching changes *do* occur in this and related views—as well as in authoritarian political and socioeconomic arrangements associated with them—modernity's attempt to gain wealth and security through technological control over nature could trigger off ecological catastrophes capable of destroying humankind and the rest of terrestrial life."[14]

Zimmerman identifies three major branches of radical ecology: deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism. Regarding the first, deep ecologists blame the ecological crisis on "anthropocentric humanism that is central to the leading ideologies of modernity, including liberal capitalism and Marxism."[15] They seek to dispel the false notion that humankind is separate from, distinct from, and ontologically superior to the rest of nature. In their view, "[A]ttempts to gain control of nature have also led to attempts to control human behavior in ways that limit freedom and prevent 'self-realization.' In general, deep ecologists call for a shift away from anthropocentric humanism toward an ecocentrism guided by the norm of self-realization for all beings."[16]

Social ecologists are more specific in their critique, narrowing their focus down from overarching anthropocentrism to the social structures rooted in authoritarianism, as seen in both capitalism and state socialism. Social ecologists critique the "[w]anton destruction of nature [which reflects] the distorted social relations at work in hierarchical systems, in which elites subjugate other people while pillaging the natural world for prestige, profit, and control."[17] Social ecologists insist that human beings are, in a sense, nature becoming conscious of itself, and that the way to preserve human life is for people to see themselves fully embedded in the natural systems that sustain them. According to Zimmerman, "[S]ocial ecologists call for small-scale, egalitarian, anarchistic societies, which recognize that human well-being is inextricably bound up with the well-being of the natural world on which human life depends."[18]

The third type of radical ecology Zimmerman describes is ecofeminism. Ecofeminists explain the ecological crisis as "the outcome of patriarchy that follows the 'logic of domination.'… Wild nature, then, like 'headstrong' women, must be tamed, ordered, and otherwise rendered pliant to masculine will. According to ecofeminists, only dismantling patriarchy will free human relations and nature alike from the dark consequences of the logic of domination."[19]

Zimmerman's book critically analyzes and assesses all three strands and asserts that "radical ecologists have no choice but to enter into a *contest* to determine which of many competing views will shape the future of human society and the living Earth."[20] He uses the term "contest" in the most positive sense of the word, explaining that it encourages the best in all contenders. In Zimmerman's view,

a vital contributor to that contest is that of ecofeminism, which he sees as containing helpful correctives to both deep and social ecology. For Zimmerman, the concern about deep ecology stems from the ecofeminist "charge that progressive views of history are accounts of the rise to power of the masculine ego. Some ecofeminists read deep ecology's ideal of wider identification [with nature] as grounded in a masculinist concept of self which seeks to obliterate difference by reducing everything 'other' to 'same.'"[21] He looks to ecofeminism to develop a post-patriarchal "progressive" view of history.

Part Two: Ecological Theology—A Brief Overview

If the environmental movement is similar to a river whose exact beginning is difficult to locate, then ecological theology may be compared to a spring that bubbles up from the ground at a certain spot, but whose true origins are so deep and diffuse, its actual genesis defies precise determination. As H. Paul Santmire states, "Ecological theology is a relatively new movement in the world of christian [sic[22]] thought and practice and therefore is neither widely understood nor easily defined, even by those who are variously involved in the movement."[23] One could make the argument that any summary of ecological theology should include a survey of the history of the theology of nature as found in the writings of early Christian theologians and trace its development through the millennia to the present day. Fortunately, Santmire has already done this work in his volumes *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* and *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*. Other scholars would recommend taking a wider view of how different religions have related to the natural world and the modern study of environmentalism and ecology. That has been well covered by authors and editors such as Celia Deane-Drummond, Roger Gottlieb, Laurel Kearns, and Catherine Keller.

For our purposes, we'll focus on an article written by Lynn Townsend White in 1967, which is widely regarded as being the first to introduce the idea that Judeo-Christian tradition may be a main contributor to the current ecological crisis. In the nearly fifty years since the publication of that essay, his critique has reached across the globe, meeting and joining other voices in the religious realm that speak *of* Earth and *for* Earth in the context of biblical hermeneutics, theological inquiry, liturgical studies, feminism and gender equality, and ethics and justice issues.[24] And because some

of the presuppositions he introduced have had lasting influence on consequent ecological theologians, some of which are problematic to ecofeminist theologians, it is pertinent to undertake a critical assessment of his work.

"The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"

White's essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," sought to find the underlying presuppositions that have led to our ecological crisis. First, he identified Western science and technology imposed in thoughtless, arrogant, and empirical ways as sharing much of the guilt for the crisis. The roots can also be traced back to medieval peasants who developed "ruthless plowing," which changed the relationship between humanity and earth from one of interdependence to that of exploitation. But, according to White, there is an even deeper cause: religion, which, in his view, has deeply and devastatingly conditioned our oppressive relationship to nature. Specifically, Judeo-Christian religion has conditioned humanity toward this oppressiveness and bears "a huge burden of guilt" for paving the way for scientific and technological power to get out of control. White's essay laid the blame for the ecological crisis firmly at the feet of the biblical traditions that create "Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature…[in which] we are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim."[25]

In White's analysis, beginning with the Creation narrative itself, the anthropocentric attitude of the Judeo-Christian religion affected the way humanity treated the environment:

> By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.[26]

While White raises some important points to consider, subsequent scholars have found his critique to be overgeneralized and lacking in a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the text. For example,

Sallie McFague counters, "It is simplistic to blame the Hebrew and Christian traditions for the ecological crises, as some have done, on the grounds that Genesis instructs human beings to have 'dominion'; nevertheless, the imagery of sovereignty supports attitudes of control and use toward the nonhuman world."[27] McFague's assessment proves correct, especially after a closer reading of Genesis, which yields a more complex theological rendering of the interrelationship between God, humans, and nonhumans on this planet. As we will see, White's critique is too general and not informed by proper, detailed study of the text (although this may be due to the fact that at the time when White was writing, the subdiscipline of ecological hermeneutics within biblical studies had not yet emerged).

In his sweeping view, White does not distinguish between the Priestly and Yahwist accounts in Genesis, which need to be examined and contrasted. When teasing apart the two accounts, carefully considering the concerns, choice of words, and differing emphases of these authors, one discovers a more nuanced reading of Genesis. Granted, biblical scholars such as von Rad and Brueggemann have shown that the Priestly version of the Creation story (1:1—2:4) does, indeed, establish a paradigm of hierarchy and domination for humankind over and above the earth and its creatures.[28] However, what White failed to realize is that the Yahwist account of Creation provides a model for humans caring for and working alongside Earth as partners in God's Creation. In Genesis 2:15 we read, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." As Carol Newsome points out, this is God creating a relationship between Earth and earthling—not of human over Earth, but human within and beside Earth. "The image that Genesis has of the original human relationship to the environment is one that involves interaction but of a very modest sort. The forest of Eden is imagined as what we would call a permaculture, where human attention is part of the ecosystem, but of a nature rather like 'light pruning and raking.'"[29]

Nevertheless, while White may have missed the mark in pinpointing the origin of the ecological crisis on the theology of Genesis, his observations of the way Christianity became hostile toward the natural world are much more on-target. He noted that as Christianity spread into the Mediterranean and northward into Europe, its adherents engaged in de-spiritualizing the pagan practices of honoring all aspects of Creation. Thus it became "possible [for

Christianity] to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."[30] Add to this the Latin West's approach to science and technology, which eventually removed the necessity of God in Creation, and nature is rendered completely vulnerable to conquest because of "man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature."[31] White warned that the ecological crisis will continue to worsen until "we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."[32]

Indeed, Christianity itself is not to be rejected—just those tenets that serve to drive our planet further into the breach. Instead, a "recycling" of images, stories, and myths is necessary for the rehabilitation of our religion and, in turn, God's Creation. In White's words:

> Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny.[33]

White's proposed solution was to learn from Saint Francis of Assisi "the virtue of humility, not merely for the individual but for man as a species."[34] His hope was that, inspired by Saint Francis, humanity will be able to see all creatures as brothers and sisters joining in praise of God, thus respecting, honoring, protecting, and learning from them. For White, the answer is not to jettison Christianity, but in fact to embrace the "transcendent Creator, who, in the ultimate gesture of cosmic humility, assumed flesh, lay helpless in a manger, and hung dying on a scaffold."[35]

Ecological Theology, Panentheism, and Subscendence

One of the most basic questions we need to answer in developing a theology for Creation-crisis preaching is how we understand the relationship between Creator and Creation. Traditionalists may feel some nervousness that this project will result in animism (the belief that natural objects and phenomenon contain the whole of the Divine), which would lead to a pagan idolatry of Creation. This is certainly not my intention, because there is indeed a differentiation between who God is and what God creates. I would argue, however, that the

pendulum has swung so far to the extreme of detached theism that a rupture in the relationship between humanity, God, and Creation has resulted. It is high time for a move in a direction that would re-envision the natural world as sacred and thus deserving of human nurture and love. Thus I turn to *panentheism* as a way to emphasize God's immanence in Creation while retaining God's transcendence and distinction from Creation. This position holds that Creation is part of God but does not constitute the whole of God.

Mark Wallace's work on *Christian animism* is helpful here. He notes the apparent disjointedness between the historic Christian proclivity to view the material world as inferior to the soul and spirit. This results in a world- and flesh-denying belief that is at odds with classic animists who see all of the created world as infused with goodness and God's presence. What Wallace points out is that there is a distinction between paganism/heathenism/pantheism and the kind of Christian animism he envisions. Where Christian animism differs is its emphasis on panentheism, whereby God's Spirit is infused within the created world but cannot be limited to or contained within that creation. Rather than continue to emphasize God's transcendence, Wallace introduces a new term, *subscendence*:

> God flowing out into the Earth, God becoming one of us in Jesus, God gifting to all creation the Spirit to infuse all things with divine energy and love. Now nothing is held back as God overflows Godself into the bounty of the natural world. Now all things are bearers of the sacred; everything that *is* is holy; each and every creature is a portrait of God.[36]

Thus Wallace creates a dialectic of "ensoulment" (Earth blessed as the living realization of divine grace) and "enfleshment" (God pouring out Godself into the carnal reality of lived existence).[37]

As will be seen in the sermons throughout this book, the concepts of panentheism and subscendence will undergird the theological premises of Creation-crisis preaching. This is not to say that there are no other theological frameworks for understanding the relationship between God and Creation when thinking about green preaching. Others, for example, may hold to a strictly transcendent theology and think about the "voice" of Earth and nonhuman entities in a purely metaphoric or poetic way. My approach in this book does not preclude other frameworks and allows that there are other entry points for approaching homiletics from an ecotheological perspective.

My development of the present project, however, finds its footing in the notion of God's immanence in Creation in a panentheistic way, being "in, with and under," as Luther described.

Ecological Theology: A Lutheran Perspective

One of the first theologians to respond to the call to overlay the concerns of our modern ecological crisis upon the Christian faith, and vice versa, was H. Paul Santmire, a Lutheran scholar whose 1970 book *Brother Earth: Nature, God, and Ecology in a Time of Crisis* was among the first to articulate an ecological theology. A pioneer in what was a nascent field at the time, Santmire helped to organize a conference at Wellesley College entitled "An Ecological Reformation of Christianity?" in 1974.[38] He went on to write several books that provide a helpful background for understanding a theology of nature traced through the writings of Christian thinkers throughout history. Though often laboring alone or with a handful of other like-minded scholars in this new field of thought, [39] Santmire's work is emblematic of the steadfast Lutheran engagement with ecotheology over the last fifty years. As Santmire observes:

> From the outset, particularly in the United States, lutherans have been deeply involved [in ecotheology]. One might even argue that american lutherans have played a central role in the cultivation of this new field, both at the reflective, theological level and in the wider dimensions of church life, especially by the production of two theologically substantive social teaching statements (1972, 1993) and by the emergence of a host of practical ministries in lutheran circles that have embodied and, in some sense, tested the viability of the theological reflection and the social teaching statements.[40]

Unlike our metaphorical river of environmentalism and bubbling spring of ecological theology, the emergence of American Lutheran ecotheology, according to Santmire, can be pinpointed to a precise year: 1962, when a relatively obscure American Lutheran theologian named Joseph Sittler addressed the World Council of Churches Assembly in New Delhi and called for a "Christology of nature." At the time, the predominant view of nature among Christians, including Lutherans, was a continuation of that which had arisen during the period of Protestant Orthodoxy[41] and continued through the theo-anthropocentric theology of Karl Barth. Christians saw nature "mainly

as the stage for human history and as the world of resources given to humans by God for the sake of human well-being and human justice."[42] In contrast, Santmire and other Lutheran ecotheologians such as Larry Rasmussen (eco-ethics), Ted Peters (eschatology), Terence Freitheim (biblical studies), and Gordon Lathrop (liturgical studies) began the shift toward a theo-cosmocentrism. In this new paradigm,

> the chief objects of theological reflection are God and the whole created world… Human creatures, according to this way of thinking, are fully and irrevocably imbedded in nature, notwithstanding the fact, variously expressed, that humans, even as they are essentially interconnected with all other creatures, nevertheless have a divinely bestowed vocation that in some sense differentiates them from all other creatures, just as all other creatures also have divinely bestowed characteristics that in some sense differentiate them from one another, in the one created world of "nature" (Joseph Sittler) or the one created earth-community (Larry Rasmussen).[43]

In this paradigm there is a move away from seeing humans in a hierarchical, domineering relationship with Earth and its creatures toward seeing them as being in kinship with all God's Creation. Values such as caring, loving, communion, and cooperation with nature replace those of objectification, commodification, abuse, and destruction. This has implications for humans' relationship not just with nature but also with each other. For if the ethic of care is inclusive of both humans and other-than-humans, concerns for justice become expansive in all directions across the web of life.

One of the highlights of Lutheran ecotheology in terms of its relevance for the Church as well as the larger society is the 1993 social statement co-authored by Santmire for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America entitled "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice."[44] With clear biblical foundations and sharp analysis of the ecological crisis of our time, the document engaged in comprehensive and sophisticated ethical discourse—one that provided a helpful theological framework for interpreting what the human relationship with nature is intended by God to be. This included a global and social justice perspective that lifted up the need to care for the poor and oppressed in light of the interrelated degradation of nature.

Another movement of note within American Lutheranism has been that of grassroots environmentalism. New Testament scholar David Rhoads has been an inspirational and indefatigable force behind the establishment of the Lutherans Restoring Creation movement and the website "The Web of Creation." Rhoads has also worked in conjunction with other ecotheologians worldwide to create the website "Let All Creation Praise," based on an experimental liturgical lectionary that focuses on ecological theology and ecojustice issues. The site also includes resources for worship planning, preaching, prayers, rituals, and orders of worship with Creation-care themes.

Santmire also notes with admiration that much of this grassroots Lutheran environmentalism was able to take hold because of a long and robust history of outdoor ministry within the Lutheran Church. Church camps and places such as Holden Village in Washington State helped create a hospitable setting for grassroots Lutheran environmentalism to go mainstream, observes Santmire.[45] Today Lutheran colleges, universities, and seminaries are taking seriously the role of being both leaders and models of "greening" their curricula and campuses.[46]

As Santmire points out, however, the history of Lutheran ecotheology has been dominated almost exclusively by white, academically-oriented men. He notes that "this situation must change."[47] As of 2012, he believed that as the second chapter of American Lutheran ecotheology was beginning to be written, things *were* changing. He envisions a more global focus for Lutheran ecotheology in the years ahead, and hopes for more women to arise within this discipline.[48]

Part Three: Scriptural Eco-Hermeneutics

Before explaining the recent development of ecological hermeneutics within the study of biblical interpretation, I wish to briefly describe the hermeneutical framework that I have found helpful in developing an ecological hermeneutic for preaching. In his tome *Truth and Method,* the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has provided a key concept that will aid in the discussion of preaching and ecotheology—that of the *fusion of horizons.* Having this model for "understanding understanding" in place will better enable the navigation and interweaving of the various "horizons" within this project of ecological preaching.

Hermeneutics According to Gadamer

Hermeneutics is the study of understanding and interpretation. Within the word, one may recognize the name Hermes from Greek mythology. "Hermes served as a messenger of the gods, charged with the task of transmitting divine communication into a form human intelligence can grasp. Retaining this basic meaning, hermeneutics in the modern period was viewed initially as a discipline concerned with the art and science of the interpretation of ancient texts in ways that were meaningful to people in the present."[49] Thus hermeneutics can mean either the way in which a particular text is interpreted and the art and science by which a text is made meaningful, or it can refer to the study of the interpretive process itself.

The singular contribution Gadamer made to the discipline of hermeneutics was his claim that the interpreter is not just a subject over against a text (be it a piece of art, a work in literature, and so on), but is actually and simultaneously an object addressed by the text as subject. As Bjorn Ramberg puts it in his summary of Gadamer's thought: "It is not really we who address the texts of tradition, but the canonic texts that address us. Having traveled through decades and centuries, the classic works of art, literature, science, and philosophy question us and our way of life. Our prejudices…are brought into the open in the encounter with the past."[50]

In Gadamer's hermeneutical circle, when you stand at a particular perspective and encounter a particular "other" (such as a text, person, work of art, etc.), you see what he calls a "horizon" of that distant other and all the meaning it has accumulated up to the point of your encounter with it. At the same time, the other is encountering your horizon as well, along with all your "prejudices" (pre-judgments) that you bring to the point of encounter. It is at that point of encounter where the "fusion of horizons" occurs. According to Gadamer, this is the movement of the two horizons toward a shared point of understanding and meaning. As he explains, "In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there, old and new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other."[51] This is not to say that there is a complete overtaking of one horizon by the other. Rather, there is a tension between the two horizons that is a natural result of the "otherness" encountered by each of the two horizons. The task of

hermeneutics, then, takes place in the interplay of interpretation and understanding in the dialectical exchange between the two horizons.

Preaching Informed by the "Horizon" of Creation

A key concept for Gadamer is "historically effected consciousness" wherein all understanding is affected, not just by an event or text in the past, but also by the accumulation of interpretation and tradition radiating forth from that event/text through history. Thus our consciousness is inevitably shaped by all that has come before us. The fusion of horizons as brought about by this historically effected consciousness has important ramifications for preaching that is informed by ecotheology. Any preacher can be seen as standing at the nexus between various horizons encountering each other. The Bible, the cumulative tradition of exegesis over the centuries, the contemporary context of a particular congregation, the Holy Spirit we assume to be guiding our interpretation, the listeners on a particular Sunday, and the preacher herself/himself are all intersecting at the point of a fusion of horizons that is the sermon.[52] But for the preacher concerned with ecotheological issues, one other horizon will come to bear—the horizon of God's Creation. In fact, it is a literal horizon, that which is experienced *on Earth*. This has been a scantily explored realm in both hermeneutics and homiletics, but it warrants serious attention for preachers committed to ethical preaching appropriate for the environmental crisis that affects Earth and Earth's inhabitants today. Such a horizon brings with it an accumulation of historically effected consciousness that predates the existence of human beings, and yet is greatly affected by its encounter with the human subject today. When such a preacher brings this horizon of God's Creation into an encounter with the reading of Scripture, the result is biblical eco-hermeneutics.

Biblical Eco-hermeneutics

Biblical ecological hermeneutics is an emerging field that began in 2000 with the work of Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger publishing The Earth Bible series. Both men went on to become co-chairs of the Section on Ecological Hermeneutics of the Society of Biblical Literature, which seeks to encourage biblical exegesis informed by the "Earth Bible Principles." Their chief aims are:

> to declare, before reading the text, that we are members of a human community that has exploited, oppressed, and

> endangered the existence of Earth community; to become progressively more conscious that we are also members of the endangered Earth community in dialogue with ancient texts; to recognize Earth as a subject in the text with which we seek to relate empathetically rather than as a topic to be analyzed rationally; to take up the cause of justice for Earth and to ascertain whether Earth and Earth community are oppressed, silenced, or liberated in the text; and to develop techniques of reading the text to discern and retrieve alternative traditions where the voice of Earth and Earth community has been suppressed.[53]

Six ecojustice principles were developed in dialogue with ecologists as well as theologians and biblical scholars. We will want to keep these in mind as we consider scriptural exegesis for Creation-crisis preaching. The principles are as follows:

1. *The principle 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, Earth, and all its components are 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 with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.
6. *The principle of resistance:* Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.[54]

While I will be delving into these principles more as the book unfolds, for now I want to stress Habel and Trudinger's insistence that "there is no 'orthodox' ecological hermeneutical method. Rather within the current environmental crisis, in dialogue with the growing field of ecology, and in line with recent hermeneutical approaches such as feminist and postcolonial readings, ecological hermeneutics is a work in progress."[55] What this ecological hermeneutic demands,

however, is a "radical reorientation to the biblical text."[56] This is not simply joining ecology to a theology of biblical criticism in order to render it as a particular object of study. Rather, Earth is seen as a *subject* in the text, capable of encountering the text from its own horizon, with an attending hermeneutic of suspicion (here one will recognize a feminist influence on this approach). Ultimately, one of the key tasks of ecological hermeneutics is "to retrieve the perspective or voice of Earth and Earth community of whom we humans are but one species."[57] Key to my project will be to bring an *ecofeminist* perspective to these ecojustice principles.

The task of biblical ecological hermeneutics, however, brings up an obvious question: *How* do Earth and its inhabitants make their perspectives known in a discourse that uses traditional human language? Gadamer's hermeneutical framework can be helpful here as well. In his chapter "Language as the Medium of Hermeneutic Experience," he explains that in order for two individuals of different languages to speak to each other, they must initially engage in translation. "Thus every translation is at the same time an interpretation," he adds.[58] In trying to "converse" with other-than-human nature, we have to "translate" because it does not speak to us in human language. This will involve imaginative and creative engagement with animals, plants, and entire ecosystems to "hear" what they might say. This is already being done by naturalists, biologists, and environmental scientists who "listen" to species and ecosystems by way of observation, collection and analysis, and interpretation of data. In fields other than science, examples of "listening" to Earth can be found in any of The Earth Bible series volumes, in which theologians and biblical scholars work from an eco-centric hermeneutic to interpret the text from Earth's point of view.

Admittedly, this task of dialoguing with the other-than-human realm is fraught with the potential for misunderstanding, misguided motives, and manipulation. Questions about discernment will need to be asked as we wonder who gets to speak for Earth—environmentalists? land developers? impoverished women? advertising firms? theologians? Agreeing on a criteria for discerning the "true" voice of Earth and Earth's inhabitants will be a tremendous challenge. Nevertheless, it behooves us to at least try to understand what the other-than-human other is trying to communicate to us. It will be one of the chief tasks of Creation-crisis preaching to help listeners find common ground for communicating with each

other about how we may proclaim God's Word of justice, hope, reconciliation, and healing for the Earth community, inclusive of humanity. We turn to this task in the next chapter.

Notes

[1]I am cognizant that this overview is ameri-centric and thus lacking in global scope. In many ways it was the threats to local environments posed by American imperialism throughout the globe (deforestation, commandeering of natural resources, building of dams, and other instances of what ecofeminist Vandana Shiva would call "mal-development") that prompted a need for concerted environmental attention in other countries.

[2]Gifford Pinchot coined the term "wise use" in 1910 as a way to describe the idea of sustainably harvesting natural resources. It also included the notion of multiple uses for public land, ranging from recreation to timber harvesting to wildlife habitat preservation. In modern times, however, the term was co-opted by some anti-environmental groups opposed to the environmental movement on the grounds that land use is to be unfettered by legislation and the political agenda of environmentalists. (See James McCarthy, "First World Political Ecology: Lessons from the Wise Use Movement," *Environment and Planning*, 2002, vol. 34, pp. 1281–1302.) The Wise Use movement is also driven in part by the theological argument that God gave the earth to human beings for their benefit. (See: Chris Crews, "Contesting the Anthropocene: Fundamentalism, Science and the Environment," WPSA Paper Presentation, March 29, 2013. Accessed February 18, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/3090128/Contesting_the_Anthropocene_Fundamentalism_Science_and_the_Environment; and Stephenie Hendricks, *Divine Destruction: Dominion Theology and American Environmental Policy*, [Hoboken, N.J.: Melville House, 2005].)

[3]There is a distinction between *ecology* and *environmental studies*, and it is one of scope. Ecology refers to the study of living things within a biome and their relationships with each other and nonliving entities. Environmental studies include ecological considerations, but apply them to the realm of human interaction, including the social and political aspects of such relationships.

[4]Christopher Rootes, "Environmental Movements," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 612.

[5]Ibid., 613–14.

[6]Ibid., 614.

[7]Ibid., 615.

[8]Ibid.

[9]It is worth noting one exception to communities of color being subjected to environmental toxins—that of slickwater hydraulic fracturing (fracking), which is happening in rural, low-income areas typically populated by whites. This issue of fracking will be addressed throughout this book.

[10]Robert D. Bullard, ed., *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002). See also: Ronald Brownstein, "The Toxic Tragedy," in Ralph Nader, Ronald Brownstein, and John Richard (eds.), *Who's Poisoning America: Corporate Polluters and Their Victims in the Chemical Age* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1982); Robert D. Bullard, "Solid Waste Sites and the Black Houston Community," *Sociological Inquiry* 53 (Spring 1983), 273–88; Robert D. Bullard,"Environmentalism and the Politics of Equity: Emergent Trends in the Black Community," *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 12 (Winter 1987), 21–37; Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Wastes Sites* (New York: United Church of Christ, 1987); Julian McCaull, "Discriminatory Air Pollution: If the Poor Don't Breathe," *Environment* 19 (March 1976), 26–32; David Morell, "Siting and the Politics of Equity," in Robert W. Lake, ed., *Resolving Locational Conflict* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research, 1987), 117–36.

[11]Rootes, "Environmental Movements," 616.

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