

# *ARA ONIMAKI AE O- TABANIN: ECOLOGIZING OUR FAITH*

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Climate Change and Sea Level Rise & Adaptation  
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# Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

- ▣ origins and responsibilities lay elsewhere;
- ▣ 'greenhouse mafia' and their interconnections - big corporations, compromised bureaucracies, and complicit political leaders who control and shape public policies;
- ▣ our islands are at the mercy of a voracious consumer spirit and an empire building persona;
- ▣ no individual person or country or company is totally responsible: it is really a way of being.

# What ought we to do?

- ▣ Because it is a way of being, a way of development which has brought many good things to humankind, but also forever running the risk of creating environmental catastrophes and ecological collapse, the issue at stake here, therefore, is
  - partly one of *empowerment* – so that people are not struck by impending disaster to psychic numbing;
  - and also partly one of *adhesion* – that is, of owning a situation and exploring what can be done within its own limits. Not one of us is the Saviour of the world!

# So where do we begin?

- ▣ Science: it tells/ describes to us a lot about our world, and we need to know all that can be discerned;
- ▣ The science of climate change and environmental care is a contested space;
- ▣ since scientists can differ, their advice can cause psychic numbing because of the fear they can generate, and at times problematic when it comes to action because of their disagreement;
- ▣ what are other forms or modes of discernment that can complement our scientific information to empower us to avoid anxiety and inaction, own this environmental and ecological collapse, and do something about it?

# Coming to our senses

- ▣ Theology: making relevant eternal truths to contemporary situations and generations;
- ▣ Christian theology is rooted in Biblical theology and Christian traditions;
- ▣ Repentance (metanoia) = a change of direction in order to hit a target; coming to our senses when the truth is revealed to us, about us, about our world, about the whole of creation, and about our place in this created order;

# Finding our place within creation

- ▣ 2 creation narratives in the Christian tradition from the Hebrew scriptures (OT)
  - ▣ Gen. 1: 1-2: 3
  - ▣ Gen. 2: 4-24
- ▣ Creation is good;
- ▣ Man & woman created on the sixth day – the last and crown of God's work (Gen 1:27);
- ▣ Man formed from the dust and appeared before the plants and animals (Gen 2:8), and placed by God in the garden God had planted.

# The Ambiguity of this Judaeo-Christian tradition

- ▣ man, created in the image of God, is the Lord of God's creation, given authority to rule over and subdue every living thing (1:26-28);
  - verses ...
- ▣ man to 'work it and take care' of God's garden (2:15);
- ▣ the two views of man may disagree, but both are anthropocentric – that is, human centred
- ▣ creation as the stage upon which the drama of human salvation is acted out.



# Appocalyptic terrorism

- ▣ Emphasis on heaven and the afterlife;
- ▣ main theme: this created order is disposable;
- ▣ Focus on battle and victory, dominion and subjugation;
- ▣ have forgotten to notice that the priestly narrative in Genesis refers to the goodness of God's creation



# Is there another option?

- ▣ There is another tradition: less concerned with humanity - human relationships, political domain, and human affairs.
- ▣ an ecological tradition, where reality and truth is presented from the perspective of the trees and animals;
- ▣ every doctrine is explored and understood from a particular perspective – e.g an ecological perspective.

# Christian life and natural order

- ▣ Christian commitment to environmental concern is not because of pressure groups or culture: it has to do with the kind of God we confess;
- ▣ To believe in God is to believe that creation is the work of a loving and caring God; to love God is to look after his 'garden'
- ▣ it is never ours: we are merely stewards and custodians of the 'garden'

# Christian life and natural order

- ▣ We are citizens of Kiribati, but we are also citizens of the world;
- ▣ Christian ethic of the environment will need to address social and economic matters;
- ▣ Christian justice is about eco-justice – justice for land, water, and oceans biodiversity;
- ▣ Christian life is about hospitable citizenship in the household of life.

# Christian engagement

- ▣ campaign and legislate 1001 dos and don'ts to protect our shoreline and biodiversity;
- ▣ Changing our lifestyle that contribute to environmental and ecological problems;
- ▣ Teaching our children to be environmentally friendly;
- ▣ Ban carbon-trading in the Pacific region;
- ▣ Including all those mentioned in Section III Part D of the Kiribati National... & Action Plan

# Criteria for success

1. Individuals, but especially those who call themselves Christian, to be holistic, innovative, and adaptive;
2. Sin and evil extend to thoughts and deeds that have no consideration to plants and animals or are destructive to land and ocean biodiversity;
3. Man is no longer the 'crown of God's creation' but one of the creatures of God;

3. While competition and profit are good for business, man is not made for business, but business for man;
4. Security is no longer an issue: there is always peace and food for tomorrow;
5. Spiritually is bio-spiritually, where Christians/everyone are able to link with their lands and oceans and have a sense of wonder and respect for them;

6. Christianity or being human in the Christian sense has moved beyond anthropocentrism to include ecocentrism as well;
7. Christian faith is no longer just about good relationships between man and man, and man to God, but between man to his environment as well. It is and should be ecologized faith.