

Ecotheology as a Basic Human Attitude to the Environment

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ABSTRACT

Discussions about the relationship between theology and ecology are getting more and more attention from various perspectives, not only in the Christian community but also in various communities (religions) in this world. The current state of the environment has been described as a "crisis", and as an "earth destruction". Every year about ten thousand species are wiped out on earth. Soon the world will be wiped out with a large number of extinctions of that species. Soon the world will be wiped out with a large number of extinctions of that species. The church doesn't really care about this environmental damage problem. The church must be a pioneer in maintaining and safeguarding the universe created by God. All life on planet earth is being threatened with a "second death". The first death is human death and the second death will soon follow, namely the death of the entire system of life. This environmental crisis is also seen in Indonesia, such as environmental pollution, especially plastic waste in the oceans, floods triggered by damage to ecosystems, dry seasons that cause drought, and forest fires that cause smog impacts on neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. Not to mention other disasters such as landslides, and others, which are caused by the ecological crisis. Ecotheology is expected to provide understanding and solutions to this problem.

Key words: Ecotheology, Basic human attitude, Environment

Introduction

Today's environmental damage must be a common concern, and because of that, since 1961, Joseph Stiler (Aritonang, 2018) has warned of the need for eco-theology. He stated that one of the parties who contributed to the destruction of the environment as humans, starting from an ecological and spiritual crisis. This study becomes a concept or movement that invites humans to be responsible for maintaining the balance of nature by developing various interpretations in theological works. It is intended that humans, especially Christians, are aware that the ecological crisis can result in suffering and global

human threats.

According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia produced up to 65 million wastes in 2016 which increased to 67 tons in 2017. Meanwhile, the LIPI Oceanography Center custom shows that around 33.15% of coral reefs in Indonesia are in poor condition, and only 6.39% are in excellent condition. Global warming is triggered by the burning of coal which reaches its total annual emission of 9 billion tons of CO₂; the existence of land conversion and forest destruction with total emissions reaching 2.53 billion tons of CO_{2e} and energy use, agriculture, and waste activities with 451 million CO₂. Another problem that becomes an

environmental problem is global warming, the process of increasing the average temperature of the ocean-atmosphere and the earth's surface. Many impacts are caused by global warmings such as the destruction of living ecosystems and the sinking of small islands, due to rising sea levels due to melting ice sheet at the poles (Ngabalin, 2020).

Churches and Christians are always involved in the ological activities to continue to be aware of their responsibilities in realizing a good fellowship between humans and the environment (Borrong, 1999).

Research Methods

The method used in this study is a literature review method using an ecotheological approach according to Drummod (Deane-Drummond, 1999), as follows:

1. The biblical approach, which highlights various biblical texts and interprets them in a new way, in which the text is reconstructed with a new ecological perspective. The experts who joined The Earth Bible Project Team have succeeded in publishing The Earth Bible Series, including the title Reading From the Perspective of Earth.
2. The historical approach, which presents various opinions in history and seeks to explore the relevance of various different traditions, for example from the Franciscan tradition you can learn about the Sacramental Approach, from the Benedictine tradition you can learn about stewardship that can bring about change, etc. One of the books with a historical approach is The Travail of Nature (Tucker and Grim, 2016).

In some of the expert reviews above, the context, in this case understanding and facts, is the main material in constructing arguments for ecotheology proponents. The interpretation of Scripture and church traditions was re-evaluated from an ecological point of view. This creates a new meaning in a text.

Results

Ecotheology is inseparable from social justice. The principle of justice is the basis for viewing ecology. The link between ecology and justice is very important, because respect for the unity of nature must be considered in the context of social justice. Political and economic policies have always been related to justice for all creation, including nature. The two are inseparable. The justice that is fought for human

beings will be in vain if there is no justice for the entire universe. Prosperity for humans is not merely a measure, justice must take into account the prosperity of natural factors. This view tries to remind the world that political policies often affect nature. The tendency is that nature is often sacrificed for political and economic interests. The development of industry, for example, can indeed provide prosperity for humans, but also brings extraordinary pollution to the universe (Aritonang, 2018).

Religion plays a role in the process of forming a value system within a person so that every believer is able to use it in understanding, evaluating, and interpreting situations and experiences. In other words, its value system is manifested in the form of norms that point to self-attitude.

An environmentalist Calvin B de Witt (Borrong, 1999), explains that:

1. Because God looks after and cares for us, then we are obliged to look after and care for His creation and be friendly with nature/environment.
2. We must enjoy but not destroy, the results (sources) contained in creation.
3. We are called to save the environment, not pollute it according to our own will or will.
4. We must earnestly seek contentment, not become greedy.
5. We must practice what we believe in and carry out our duties as stewards with full responsibility, seeking the harmony of all creation.

Thus, the task of caring is part of our nature and mission to bring peace and to actively participate in the preservation of God's creation.

In carrying out this task, the church develops various methods according to the context of each environmental crisis. The churches in Indonesia carry out the task of preserving creation with two motives. The first motive is theological motive, namely as an effort to carry out the church's mission that is universal, meaning that it includes all creation to bring peace on earth as an implementation of faith and its vocation. The second motive is the development motive, namely as one of the ways the church takes to realize its active, positive, critical and creative participation in national development.

Discussion

The term Ecotheology or commonly referred to as environmental theology, is actually an understanding which is a combination of the main points of

ecological thought, a branch of biology combined with theology. This is closely related to moral issues. Ecological problems are generally related to the moral crisis in an effort to understand the interdependence between humans and the environment. This concerns the way in which humans should behave towards their environment (Chang, 2001). The emergence of this idea of ecotheology shows that there is a general awareness in humans that so far there has been an error regarding basic human attitudes towards the environment (Chang, 2001).

Ecotheology comes from two words, namely ecology and theology. The term ecology comes from the Greek words *Oikos* (house, dwelling) and *Logos* (word, description or discourse). Ecology is often understood as a science that studies the interrelationships between creatures and their environment (Chang, 2001). Theology itself consists of the words *theos* (God) and *Logos*. So theology is a discourse about God or gods (Conradie *et al.*, 2014).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that ecotheology is a science that studies the inter-relationship between God and the universe in order to create a balance and pattern of mutual respect between humans and nature. Simon Appoloni and Heather Eaton explain the term ecotheology related to the premise of the relationship between human spirituality and nature. Ecotheology aims to find the level of natural damage and identify it, then look for solutions in the perspective of sustainability and ecosystem management. Solutions like this build hope and inspire the ethics of various religions. If someone wants to know about the environmental crisis, then a higher belief system is needed to seek inspiration for change and change the way people view nature in treating nature. Ecotheology encourages all religions to explore the interconnectedness of spirituality and ecology (Appoloni and Eaton Heathe, 2016).

Ecotheology marks the encounter between theology and ecology, the ecotheological paradigm began to emerge around the 1970s, but became popular at the end of the 20th century. The Stockholm Conference in Sweden in 1972 became the beginning of the acceptance of the ecotheological paradigm. Ecotheology emerged as a reaction to biblical interpretations that justified the act of exploiting nature freely by humans which resulted in an ecological crisis. The era of the 60s and 70s is considered the time of the birth of human ecological awareness, because in these years there was an ecological crisis

throughout the world and nature was exploited on a large scale (Sunardo and Kristyanto, 2002). The discussion on ecology actually started in 1907-1964, by Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring*. Carson criticized the use of chemical pesticides in agriculture that harm ecosystems (Clifford, 2002).

Criticisms continue to emerge, especially regarding human attitudes and actions towards nature, even criticisms are also directed at the church and Christianity. One of them is Lyne Townsend White, in her article entitled *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. He stated that when technology has developed rapidly it allows humans to exploit nature to the fullest (Borong, 1919). He points out that the industrial revolution mentality that thought the earth was just a resource for human consumption had its roots in medieval Christianity as well. According to White, what people do to nature depends on what humans think about themselves in relation to everything in the environment around them. White also thinks that there is indeed a mistake in the creationist teachings of western Christianity. He argues that Judeo-Christian theology is basically exploitative of nature because the Bible asserts human dominion over the universe which creates the tendency for anthropocentrism (Lynn White, 1967).

Next is Christians always view only humans who have the image and likeness of God while other creations do not. This makes other creations have a low status. The theology of creation that occurs, makes humans the masters of nature given a mandate from God, the Creator, to rule and rule over the universe (Inabuy, 2003).

Christians feel they have full power from the divine to continue to explore natural resources for the benefit of their lives. The idea of human power in the book of Genesis is defined as "mastery" which is further supported by scientific endeavor. This supports an ecological crisis that is, an understanding of the task of domination which is interpreted as domination and exploitation (Deane-Drummond, 1999). However, Christianity is not the only party that must be responsible for the ecological crisis that is still happening today (AE, 2008).

All people from various religions and sects are also involved in this. The development of ecotheology accelerated after White's thoughts were spread everywhere. Not only criticism of Christianity, White also sees there are theological points in the Christian tradition that view the relationship be-

tween humans and nature in a positive way. In the development of ecotheology, many theologians have expressed their opinions through various writings such as: James Barr in his writings entitled "The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament". Then there is the theologian John Macquarrie in his writing entitled "Creation and Environment" (Dalton and Simmons, 2010).

The ecological crisis also stems from the development of rationalism, this makes humans have the opinion that ratio is the only measure of human behavior both towards others and nature. This makes Ethics, as one of the theological sciences, seriously explore ecological issues. Ethics contributes in making people aware of their responsibility for the universe. Ecotheology is part of the science of Christian ethics or often called "Scope of Life Theology", especially the responsibility of Christians to the environment. The development of ecotheology is then increasingly rapid and diverse and has received support from world churches or the World Council of Churches (WCC, 1992).

Recognizing the Church's call, GMIT has participated in dealing with the problem of environmental damage and is stated in the GMIT Ecclesiology Principles, namely: "Faced with the fact that environmental damage (soil, water, forest, sea, air) is getting worse at this time, GMIT is called to take care of the universe created by God, which He created is good and even very good. Because environmental problems are a common problem, just as we are part of the problem, we are also part of the solution. The universe is God's creation and man must respect the limits placed by God himself in managing and utilizing nature for his benefit. Although humans are called the image of God, humans are not the creators of the universe (not co-creators). Therefore, the universe must be treated with respect as a fellow creation. Between God, man and the universe there is a reciprocal relationship that must be maintained with respect. Just as God makes a covenant with humans, God can also make a covenant with the universe, the fruit of His hands. Human salvation has to do with the restoration of nature. If man does not repent, then God can use the universe as a prophet who rebukes and punishes man (cf. Hos. 4:1-3). For this reason, GMIT needs to produce and develop contextual theological thoughts about the environment (ecotheology) which become the driving force for

the attention of the congregation and the community. With this contextual ecotheology, it is hoped that the congregation and local community will contribute to the world's efforts to overcome the environmental crisis, as well as to maintain it sustainably, both for humans and the natural environment" (GMIT, 2015). More than that, GMIT has also designated November as Environment Month.

Conclusion

Ecotheology as a moral ethical foundation for humans to act, be responsible for protecting and maintaining the environment as mandated by the creator.

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