



Ecological Sin and Cosmic Repentance: A Synthesis of Soteriology and Ecotheology in Light of Justification and Sanctification

Andre Shevcenco Mumu, andreshevcencomumu1005@gmail.com

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Manado

Correspondence:

andreshevcencomumu1005@gmail.com

Article History:

Submitted: July 11,
2025

Reviewed: July 13,
2025

Accepted: July 30,
2025

Keywords:

Ecological Sin,
Justification, Sanctification,
Cosmic Repentance,
Pneumatology, Ecological
Spirituality.

Copyright:

©2025, Authors.

License:



Abstract

The deepening global ecological crisis calls for a theological response that goes beyond moralistic or technical approaches. This article proposes a soteriological-ecothological framework that integrates the doctrines of justification and sanctification as the theological foundation for cosmic repentance. Ecological sin is understood as a violation against the work of the Triune God, specifically, the destruction of creation shaped by the Word and the rejection of the Holy Spirit's sustaining presence within the cosmos. Within this framework, justification is viewed as the restoration of humanity's relationship not only with God but also with creation, while sanctification is conceived as the transformative process toward ecological love and restorative action in the world. The model of cosmic repentance presented here involves both passive (ceasing to harm) and active (loving and healing the earth) dimensions, positioning believers as the body of Christ and agents of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of creation. By cultivating an ecological spirituality rooted in eschatological hope, this article affirms that Christian salvation entails not only vertical reconciliation with God but also active participation in the healing of a wounded world, as part of the fulfillment of God's redemptive work in Christ and the Spirit. Using a conceptual-theological approach within the tradition of systematic theology, this study aims to construct a normative framework that bridges soteriology and ecotheology, providing a theological foundation for the Church's spiritual and ethical engagement in responding to today's ecological crisis.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary ecological crisis has reached a global and multidimensional scale. Various forms of environmental damage—ranging from global warming and deforestation to species extinction—increasingly demonstrate that human actions have disrupted the ecological

order originally created in harmony. Although awareness of humanity's ecological impact is growing, the approaches offered to address this crisis tend to be technical, ethical, or moralistic, seldom touching upon the foundational theological dimension. In the Christian tradition, the reality of human fallenness impacts not only the relationship with God and others but also creation as a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how sin against nature—termed *ecological sin* in this context—possesses a deep spiritual character that is not merely ethical or practical. Several ecotheologians have begun to develop the understanding that ecological destruction is a form of collective sin that disturbs the harmony of creation, especially as an act against the work of the Holy Spirit who sustains and gives life to all existence (Williams, 2013). However, in the field of systematic theology, the connection between ecological sin and central doctrines such as justification and sanctification remains underexplored. Generally, these doctrines are limited to the vertical relationship between humanity and God, without developing their consequences for ecological responsibility. Yet, if humans are justified in Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, the logical consequence is active involvement in restoring the relationship with all creation that has been damaged by sin (Ellis & Wheaton, 2009; Snider, 2010).

This conceptual void indicates a significant research gap. A theological framework is needed that not only acknowledges ecological damage as a result of sin but also understands ecological repentance as an integral part of Christian salvation. Ecological repentance, in this context, is understood as *cosmic repentance*: a form of *metanoia* that includes a passive shift in attitude—by ceasing to harm nature—and an active one—by loving and restoring it as an expression of a sanctified life. This aligns with the understanding that the work of the Holy Spirit not only renews individuals but also brings all of creation toward eschatological restoration (Conradie, 2006; Pihkala, 2025).

This research aims to develop a theological understanding of ecological sin in light of the doctrines of justification and sanctification, as well as to offer a model of cosmic repentance applicable to contemporary Christian spirituality. By integrating soteriological, pneumatological, and ecotheological approaches, this paper seeks to demonstrate that salvation is not merely about a vertical relationship with God, but also about reconciliation with a wounded creation, as part of the true calling of the *imago Dei* (Lala, 2025; Williams, 2013).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative research utilizing a conceptual-theological approach. The primary focus of this research is the development of a theological framework that explains the concepts of

ecological sin and cosmic repentance in light of the doctrines of justification and sanctification. This approach is employed because the issue under investigation is normative and doctrinal, requiring an in-depth theological analysis of core concepts within Christian systematics. Data sources for this research consist of relevant literature, including books, scholarly journal articles, theses, and theological documents that discuss ecotheology, soteriology, and Christian spirituality.

The objective of this method is not merely to describe a phenomenon, but rather to develop a normative model that can contribute to the advancement of a soteriological theology sensitive to the contemporary ecological crisis. Thus, this research relies on deductive-reflective logic within the framework of systematic theology and endeavors to offer a theological synthesis that is spiritually, scientifically, and pastorally relevant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Ecological Sin: Sin Against Creation and the Holy Spirit

1. The Definition and Theological Dimensions of Ecological Sin

In Christian theological tradition, sin is classically understood as humanity's failure to live according to the will of God, literally "missing the mark," and thus being separated from God. This sin includes a vertical dimension—which damages the human relationship with the Creator—and a horizontal dimension—which harms relationships among people. However, in the era of the global ecological crisis, the understanding of sin needs to be broadened to also encompass transgressions against creation, which is the work and possession of God. Ecological sin refers to the reality that human actions that damage the earth, whether actively through the exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, and pollution, or passively through indifference to the suffering of creation, constitute a concrete form of rebellion against God's will within the cosmic order.

The theological dimension of this ecological sin is grounded in the understanding that creation is the work of the Triune God. In the thought of Jürgen Moltmann, as cited by Joas Adiprasetya, it is said that the cosmos was created by the Word who gives form and the Holy Spirit who gives life—a form of *cosmic kenosis*, an act of God's self-limitation to provide living space for other creatures (Adiprasetya, 2023). Consequently, every form of destruction against creation is a violation of the loving act of God who brought the world into a meaningful existence and relationship. Christ as the Word is the foundation of all creation, the driver of the universe's evolutionary process, and the sustainer who upholds all things according to His will (Sitohang, 2019), while the Holy Spirit is the breath of life and the guarantor of ecological harmony. Therefore, David T. Williams states that

intentional or persistent ecological destruction not only damages the environment physically but can also be understood as a sin against the Holy Spirit (Williams, 2013). In light of the passage in Matthew 12:32, this action approaches blasphemy against the Spirit, which is the rejection of the life-giving work of the Spirit.

The biblical narrative itself indicates that human sin not only impacts God and fellow humans but also brings suffering upon the earth. Norman Habel shows that in Genesis 3:17, 4:11, and 6:11, the earth bears a curse because of human sin. Creation is not a passive entity, but an agent that groans in its suffering (cf. Romans 8:22). This clarifies that ecological sin is an integral part of the narrative of the Fall and not a peripheral or secular issue (Habel, 2011).

Besides being individual, ecological sin also has a structural dimension. Exploitative global economic systems, technology detached from ethics, and political policies detrimental to the environment reflect a sinfulness that has become systemic. Ismail Lala asserts that this condition represents a failure of humanity to functionally carry out the mandate of the *imago Dei* (Lala, 2025). As the image of God, humans are called not to conquer creation destructively, but to care for it as an extension of divine love and wisdom. When the relationship between humanity and creation is disturbed, the *imago Dei* itself becomes distorted. More profoundly, ecological sin is a form of spiritual sin. Ernst Conradie states that the ecological crisis is also a crisis of spirituality (Conradie, 2006). Modern humanity has lost its sense of reverence for the mystery and presence of God in creation. The earth is no longer seen as an *oikos*—a shared home with other creatures—but as an object for limitless exploitation. Within this framework, destructive actions against nature are not merely an ethical failure but a denial of the presence and work of God in creation.

Thus, ecological sin is a profound and complex form of sin, encompassing moral, spiritual, structural, and cosmic dimensions. This sin is a concrete expression of disobedience to the Triune God, a destruction of the work of Christ, and a rejection of the Holy Spirit who brings forth, sustains, and enlivens creation. This understanding becomes the foundation for developing a framework of *cosmic repentance*, wherein the restoration of one's relationship with God must be realized tangibly in the restoration of the relationship with the earth and all that it contains.

2. The Ecology Created by the Word

The created world, or ecology, originates from and is sustained by the Word—Jesus Christ. Within the framework of creation theology, the Word is not merely the instrument of creation but also the ontological foundation and ultimate purpose of all reality. The Gospel of John affirms that "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

This indicates that the ecological order is not something neutral, but rather the result of the active will of the Word of God who creates and sustains the universe (Sitohang, 2019).

Cosmic Christology, as developed in the writings of Bangun Sitohang, provides a strong foundation for this understanding. Christ is understood as the foundation of creation, the driver of the universe's evolution, and the redeemer of all creation. This means that ecology is not only created through Christ (Col. 1:15–20) but is also sustained and directed toward eschatological restoration in Him. In this view, Christ is not only the Savior of humankind but also the Alpha and Omega of all creation (Sitohang, 2019).

It is important to realize that creation according to the Old Testament is understood not as a static event but as the active work of the Word of God creating order from chaos (Gen. 1:1–3). God created the world by His word, and His creation demonstrates a pattern of order and relationship among creatures. In the New Testament, Christ as the Word is present as the God who creates, redeems, and restores all of creation, not just humanity (Col. 1:16–20; John 1:1–4; 1 Cor. 8:6). Christ is called the "image of the invisible God" and the "firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15), which means that all things—whether visible or invisible—were created in Him, through Him, and for Him.

Sitohang also asserts that God's saving act in Christ targets not only individuals but also encompasses all of creation in the process of reconciliation (Sitohang, 2019). Therefore, ecological damage is a form of rebellion against Christ as the Word, because a damaged ecological order signifies a denial of His work of creation and redemption. In this context, cosmic Christology directs believers toward the awareness that ecology is part of the body of Christ, and consequently, the destruction of nature is fundamentally an offense against Him.

The thought of Teilhard de Chardin, as cited by Sitohang, also strengthens this perspective. Chardin viewed the evolutionary process of the universe toward the Omega Point, namely Christ, as a form of *Christification*—wherein all material reality is permeated by divine presence and energy. Thus, the earth and all its inhabitants are not merely a backdrop for human salvation but are part of the redemptive drama itself. Furthermore, the communion among creatures is understood as a reflection of the Trinitarian relationship—a relationship full of love, mutual giving, and mutual support.

From this, it becomes clear that ecology is not spiritually neutral. The universe is a divine household (*oikos theou*) created in love and directed toward its fullness in Christ. Therefore, to damage the ecological order is to oppose the divine current of creation, to deny the authority of Christ as the creating and redeeming Word, and to sever human participation in the Trinitarian communion. By understanding Christ as the foundation, sustainer, and goal of creation,

ecotheological action becomes not merely an ethical act, but part of a faith-based response to the Word who has created and sanctified this universe. The act of destroying nature is not only a moral error but also a denial of the presence and reign of Christ in the world.

3. Ecology as the Sphere of the Holy Spirit's Work

The understanding of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology has undergone a significant expansion of meaning, particularly in relation to creation. Whereas in the past the Holy Spirit was primarily understood in the context of human regeneration and the internal spiritual life of the church, it is now increasingly recognized that the Spirit is also a divine Person active throughout the entirety of created reality. This understanding is supported by the works of theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann, who sees the Holy Spirit not only as the Spirit of holiness but also as the Spirit of life (*Spiritus Vivificans*), who imparts dynamism, energy, and interconnectedness to all of creation (Pihkala, 2025). The Spirit is the creative power that continually works to maintain balance, preserve diversity, and connect all beings in an interdependent web of life.

David T. Williams states that the Holy Spirit can be understood as the source of the ecological harmony that underpins the sustainability of all creation (Williams, 2013). Biodiversity and highly balanced ecosystems are expressions of the Spirit's work, which creates order, regularity, and relationships among created beings. In this sense, existence and survival are not merely mechanistic or coincidental but are the result of the active work of the Spirit of God. Williams even suggests that when humans destroy this relational structure through exploitation, pollution, or neglect of nature's destruction, this action can be understood as a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, this understanding leads us to the theological awareness that ecological sin is not merely a destructive act against the physical environment, but a form of spiritual violation against the divine Person who sustains life. In light of the Gospel of Matthew 12:31–32, the act of rejecting and damaging the work of the Holy Spirit in the world can be categorized as a form of *blasphemy against the Spirit*. Of course, this does not immediately equate all destructive ecological actions with the unpardonable sin; however, Williams emphasizes that sin against the Holy Spirit must be seen in terms of a persistent attitude of denying, rejecting, and closing oneself off to the Spirit's work—including in its ecological dimension.

This line of thought is consistent with the principle of ecological pneumatology developed by many contemporary theologians, in which the Spirit is understood not only as the sanctifier of individuals but also as the one who enlivens and restores creation. The Holy Spirit becomes the bond of relation among creatures, creating an *ecological perichōrēsis*—that is, a harmony in diversity that reflects

the internal relationship of the Trinity itself (Conradie, 2006). When humans act to destroy this ecological interconnectedness, they are not only destroying nature but also denying the representation of God in the world. Within this framework, ecological sin becomes a spiritual offense against the presence of the Spirit in creation.

More profoundly, actions that reject the role of the Spirit in ecology can also create spiritual dysfunction. When humans fail to realize that the Spirit of God is present and at work in the order of nature, they will act as if the world is autonomous, neutral, and devoid of spiritual meaning. When the cosmic order is viewed as a mere material system without a divine presence, exploitative actions that expel the Spirit from the space of life are born. In this framework, ecological sin is not only an ecological transgression but also a form of self-worship and a denial of divine ownership of this world.

Therefore, acknowledging ecology as the sphere of the Holy Spirit's work not only broadens the doctrine of pneumatology but also deepens the ethical and spiritual awareness of human responsibility in the world. In this light, ecological repentance is not just a change in behavior but a transformation of faith: acknowledging the presence of the Spirit in creation, honoring it, and actively engaging in the restoration of the ecological order as a form of communion with God

B. Justification and Sanctification as the Foundation for Cosmic Repentance

1. Justification: Acknowledgment of Ecological Sin and Restoration of Identity

In the Reformation tradition, justification is a key doctrine stating that human beings are declared righteous not because of their own efforts, but through faith in Christ who bore the punishment for sin. In his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (*Lectures on Galatians*), Martin Luther asserted that justification is the "first and chief article by which the church stands or falls" (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*)—emphasizing that humanity possesses no righteousness within itself but receives it as a gift through union with Christ (Luther, 1961).

However, in the face of the ecological crisis, a critical question arises: does justification have an ecological meaning? If justification restores humanity to a right relationship with God, it is logical that it should also restore relationships damaged by sin, including the relationship with creation. Ecological sin not only expresses a moral transgression against the environment but also signifies a spiritual disconnection between humanity and the world created by God. In this context, justification must be understood as an acknowledgment of the ecological sin that disrupts the triangular relationship between God, humanity, and creation. Gretchen N. Ellis, through the framework of *duplex gratia* in Calvin's thought, shows that justification does not stand alone but is

always closely related to *unio cum Christo*—the union with Christ that unites humanity with the entirety of His redemptive work, including the restoration of the cosmos (Ellis & Wheaton, 2009). Calvin himself states in the *Institutes* that "as long as we are not united with Christ, all that He has done and suffered is of no use to us" (Calvin, 1998). This means that in union with Christ, justification flows as a form of participation in Christ's work—including the work of restoring creation that was damaged by sin (cf. Col. 1:20).

Justification restores human identity as relational beings, not only toward God but also toward others and creation. In sin, humanity claims autonomy over creation and treats it as an object of exploitation. In justification, humanity returns to the position of beings who are commissioned, not to dominate. Andrew Snider explains that from the perspective of *unio cum Christo*, justification implies the restoration of humanity's existential position, meaning they are "justified to live in obedience and love," not to revert to practicing a sinful lifestyle—including structural sin against nature (Snider, 2010).

Furthermore, ecological sin is structural and existential. It occurs not only in the form of individual actions but also within economic, social, and technological systems built upon a false dichotomy between humanity and nature. When Calvin discusses human nature and creation, he does not separate the two: "The whole world is the theater of God's glory" (Calvin, 1998). Thus, when human beings are justified by faith, they are called back to see and live in the world as a space for the revelation of God's glory—not an exploitative space.

Martin Luther also understood justification as a freedom that enables human beings to "become a servant to all creation". In his work *The Freedom of a Christian* (Luther, 1961), Luther states that a Christian is a "lord of all and subject to none," yet also a "servant of all and subject to all". This demonstrates that true justification liberates humanity from sin in order to serve creation—not to exploit it.

From this entire framework, it becomes clear that justification:

- Acknowledges the structural and spiritual sinfulness of humanity toward creation,
- Restores humanity to its covenantal position as God's servant on earth (cf. Gen. 2:15),
- Restores the vision of the world as God's sacred home,
- And opens the way for sanctification as the practical embodiment of cosmic repentance.

Thus, justification is not merely a legal status before God but also the starting point for a holistic restoration: including the identity of humanity as *ecological priests*, who live not for themselves but for the good of all creation as an extension of God's love in the world.

2. Sanctification: The Transformation of Life Toward the Care of Creation

If justification restores humanity's position before God, then sanctification is the continuous process of transformation that shapes a new person to live according to God's will. In the Reformed and Lutheran traditions, sanctification is never detached from justification; it is the fruit of union with Christ. However, unlike justification, which is declarative and judicial, sanctification is transformational and existential—involving a person's entire life in a process of renewal by the Holy Spirit. In an ecological context, sanctification must be understood as the process of consecrating the human relationship with creation, wherein justified individuals begin to live in active love for the world God created. In his work *Sanctification in Lutheran Theology*, David Scaer explains that sanctification is a life "moved by the Spirit to walk in obedience," not because of the law, but because of a living faith (Scaer, 1985). From this perspective, the care of creation is not a legalistic moral demand but an expression of love flowing from a sanctified heart. Therefore, sanctification is not merely personal moral growth but also encompasses engagement with the world as a form of faithfulness to the living God.

In his

Catechisms and *The Freedom of a Christian*, Martin Luther describes sanctification as living in daily repentance and obedience (Luther, 1961). In this tradition, sanctification occurs when believers, in the power of the Holy Spirit, dedicate their bodies and lives to God's will (Rom. 12:1). In an ecological context, this means believers are called to direct their entire lives—their manner of eating, consumption, travel, farming, waste disposal, and energy use—as spiritual worship that is pleasing to God. Even Luther, in his interpretation of Genesis, asserts that humanity was given the task to care for the garden (Gen. 2:15), not to oppress it, and that this is part of obedience to the Creator's will.

John Calvin himself did not explicitly discuss ecology in modern terminology, but in his *Institutes* and sermons, he strongly emphasized the link between faith and a holy life throughout all realms of creation. In *Institutes* III.6.1–5, Calvin asserts that "the entire life of a believer is a process of sanctification" (Calvin, 1998)—where every aspect of existence is reoriented toward the will of God. When Calvin described the world as the *theatrum gloriae Dei* (the theater of God's glory), he opened the possibility that sanctification also includes how human beings live responsibly in the world as the theater of God's glory. This means that a holy life is not just a matter of church worship or moral goodness, but also of faithfulness to the ecological calling—respecting and protecting creation as God's possession.

This view is strengthened by contemporary theological reflection. Tibor Görföl shows that in the

thought of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, sanctification includes the "sanctification of the world" (*sanctificatio mundi*) through the active participation of the faithful in caring for the beauty and order of creation (Görföl, 2025). Sanctification becomes a spiritual force that shapes the church community to be a witness to new life—including in presenting signs of ecological restoration in the midst of a broken world. It is also important to emphasize that ecological sanctification cultivates what Panu Pihkala calls *ecological spirituality*: namely, an awareness, empathy, and emotional engagement with the suffering of the earth (Pihkala, 2025). In this spirituality, sanctification is not only seen in normative obedience but also in the formation of *eco-empathy*—a spiritual concern born of the Holy Spirit for ecological destruction. This feeling then motivates action: caring, healing, restoring, and preserving creation. Ryszard F. Sadowski adds that such a form of sanctification will produce sustainable ecological behavior that arises not from external pressure but from a spiritual awareness formed by Christian faith (Sadowski, 2025).

Thus, sanctification can be understood as:

- A call to a new life in love, including love for the earth as a shared home (*oikos*).
- The formation of an ecological spirituality as the fruit of intimacy with Christ.
- The actual form of living worship: the body and the earth offered together as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1).
- And involvement in the mission of the Holy Spirit who restores creation, as a tangible expression of a holy life (Lahtinen, 2025).

Sanctification is the path by which faith in the Triune God becomes embodied, becomes action, becomes an ecological lifestyle. Believers who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit become witnesses to a creation that is being restored, and their lives become a sign that this restoration has begun—not only in the soul, but also in the wounded earth.

C. Cosmic Repentance: A Theological Model for Ecological Responsibility

1. Passive and Active Repentance

In the context of the ecological crisis, the concept of repentance must be expanded beyond a mere change in ethical or moral attitudes to a form of repentance that is cosmic in nature—that is, a change in the spiritual and existential orientation of humanity toward the created world as a whole. Cosmic repentance is not only a matter of the vertical relationship between humanity and God, but also encompasses reconciliation with a creation wounded by human sin. In the Christian tradition, repentance (*metanoia*) is a total change of mind and direction in life—a reorientation of the self from a life of sin toward a life in accordance with God's will. The theology of cosmic repentance

emphasizes two complementary dimensions: passive and active.

Passive Repentance: Ceasing to Destroy Creation

The passive dimension of cosmic repentance involves the acknowledgment and cessation of humanity's role as a destructive agent. This is a form of contrition regarding direct and indirect participation in practices that damage the earth. Ernst M. Conradie and Upolu Lumā Vaai state that the act of ceasing destruction is the first step in restoring humanity to its place within the order of creation as willed by God. In their theology, ecological repentance is not an idealistic notion but a practical response to the reality that humankind has taken God's place in creation—claiming divine authority over the earth (Conradie, 2006). In light of Reformation theology, the confession of sin is the initial step toward a renewed life. John Calvin emphasized the importance of a true repentance that begins with "a holy fear of God and shame for oneself" (Calvin, 1998). In an ecological context, this means acknowledging that humanity has failed as stewards of the earth and has lived under the illusion that creation is for humanity's exclusive possession. Passive repentance is a spiritual form of rejecting an exploitative lifestyle that legitimizes destruction for the sake of comfort and profit.

Passive repentance also includes a structural aspect: rejecting economic and social systems that institutionalize ecological destruction. Martin Luther, during the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518, stated that God's law reveals sin; it does not resolve it. Thus, an awareness of ecological sin can only bring about change if it is accompanied by the power of the Gospel—which liberates and transforms the way of life for believers. Therefore, ceasing to destroy creation is not merely an ethical act, but an expression of a faith that repents before God and surrenders to the renewal of creation by the Holy Spirit.

Active Repentance: Loving, Protecting, and Restoring the Earth

If passive repentance marks the stopping point, then active repentance marks the turning point—that is, a spiritual and practical commitment to love, protect, and restore the earth as part of the new calling in Christ. Hendry Mamengko Runtuwene, in the context of the Indonesian Protestant church, emphasizes that ecological repentance is incomplete without a transformation of liturgy, ecological faith education, and ecclesial practices that treat the earth as a subject of love (Runtuwene, 2025). A spirituality that stops at the confession of sin without producing active deeds is merely a barren form of faith (Jas. 2:17).

Ferenc Mics stresses the importance of conserving forests and habitats as a spiritual act that reflects the acknowledgment that the earth is part of the communion of creation sustained by God (Mics, 2025). In this approach, active repentance is a concrete form of ecological sanctification—believers

treat the earth not as a tool, but as a fellow creature worthy of being loved and protected. This is the fruit of a life that has been renewed by grace. Calvin, in his exposition of Genesis 2:15, notes that God's command to "work and keep the garden" is a priestly mandate, not one of domination. The role of humanity is that of a servant who cares for what is not their own. In this context, active repentance means living out this mandate once again: treating the soil, water, air, and other living beings as a gift that must be guarded for the glory of God and the good of all.

Luther, in the *Large Catechism* as contained in the *Book of Concord*, also states that God's command calls humanity not only to avoid sin but also to do good. Therefore, a true form of repentance must produce the fruit of loving action, including love for creation (Tappert, 2016). This is the embodiment of sanctification: living in the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit—which includes gentleness, self-control, and faithfulness to life (Gal. 5:22–23). Consequently, a complete cosmic repentance is a spiritual movement that encompasses contrition, the cessation of destruction, and active involvement in the restoration of creation. It is a faith-based response to the saving work of God in Christ and the Spirit, which not only liberates humanity from sin but also invites them to participate in the mission of restoring all of creation.

2. Human Involvement as the Body of Christ and Agents of the Holy Spirit in the Restoration of Creation

Cosmic repentance does not end with the dimension of confessing sin (passive) or with mere ecological action (active), but is rooted in the new identity of humanity as part of the Body of Christ and as agents of the Holy Spirit in the world. In the Christian tradition, the Body of Christ is not merely a metaphor for spiritual fellowship, but also an ecclesiological and missiological reality—one that invites the faithful to take part in the entire salvific and restorative work of God, including the restoration of creation that has been damaged by sin.

Humanity as the Body of Christ Living in a Wounded World

The Body of Christ is a profound image of the unity of the redeemed in Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), but theologically, it also encompasses the dimension of Christ's presence in a suffering world. In light of Colossians 1:20, Christ's work of reconciliation extends to "all things, whether on earth or in heaven," affirming that restoration is not limited to the spiritual aspect of humanity but touches all of creation. Thus, the church as the Body of Christ is called to be a witness to this restoration and, collectively, to become an instrument of compassion and justice for the wounded earth.

In Reformed theology, John Calvin taught that believers do not merely "put on Christ" individually; rather, they "become part of His living and active body in the world" (Calvin, 1998). This means

that every action undertaken by believers, including ecological actions, is an act performed as an extension of the life and will of Christ Himself. Therefore, environmental stewardship is not merely a "secular activity" but an expression of the mission of the Body of Christ to bring forth signs of the kingdom of God on a damaged earth. Furthermore, Calvin, in his commentary on Psalm 104, emphasized that human existence in the world must be seen as part of a cosmic liturgy: "All creatures praise the Lord with their existence." Thus, when humanity lives inharmoniously with creation, they not only sin but also "disrupt the song of praise" that was created for the glory of God.

Humanity as Agents of the Holy Spirit in the Restoration of Creation

In the pneumatological dimension, cosmic repentance implies that humanity—in union with Christ—is called to become an agent of the Holy Spirit in the project of ecological restoration. Hilla Lahtinen states that in the paradigm of Lutheran ecotheology, humanity is no longer positioned at the center within an *Anthropocene* framework, but as a participant in a *Pneumatocene*—an order of reality moved by the Holy Spirit (Lahtinen, 2025). Within this framework, the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies human beings but also leads creation toward newness and freedom from corruption (Romans 8:21–22).

David T. Williams develops the concept of humanity as *priests of creation*: beings who are sent to offer the earth back to the Creator in a holy and harmonious state (Williams, 2013). This role is not merely symbolic but eminently practical—involving an ecological lifestyle, ecological restoration, and intergenerational justice. Redeemed humanity does not live for itself but becomes part of the movement of the Spirit that heals the world.

In Luther's theology, this aligns with his understanding of *vocation* (calling). Luther believed that the entire life of a believer—whether in work, family, or social action—is the field for the actualization of faith. Therefore, involvement in the restoration of creation is not a secular calling separate from the spiritual life, but is precisely an expression of sanctification. As Luther wrote, "Faith is active in love" (Gal. 5:6, as quoted in *The Freedom of a Christian*). This understanding is also reflected in contemporary views, such as that expressed by Ernst Conradie, that the restoration of creation requires the spiritual, structural, and liturgical involvement of the church. The church, as a community of the Spirit, must become a sign and means of ecological restoration that lives out its communion with God, others, and the earth (Conradie, 2006).

D. Spirituality and Eschatological Hope in the Ecological Crisis

1. Ecological Spirituality as a Form of Collective Sanctification

Ecological spirituality is born from an awareness of God's presence in creation and an experience of the deep interconnectedness among faith, the earth, and fellow creatures. As explained by Panu Pihkala, this spirituality is a response to what he terms *eco-spiritual grief*—a spiritual sorrow over the suffering of the earth that triggers a spiritual crisis and often causes alienation from faith communities (Pihkala, 2025). In this context, ecological spirituality functions as a form of collective sanctification: believers together experience a renewal of faith through the experience of solidarity with a suffering creation.

Ryszard F. Sadowski adds that a spirituality rooted in ecotheology forms a sustainable mindset and behavior, not due to moral pressure, but as part of a holy life (Sadowski, 2025). Liturgy, prayer, fasting, and worship are not solely focused on personal salvation but become means of raising awareness and strengthening the ecological mission of the faithful. A church that lives in this spirituality will present the practice of an *earth liturgy*: celebrating the harvest with gratitude, fasting from excessive consumption, and praying and acting for ecological restoration. In this sense, ecological spirituality does not contradict orthodox faith but is an expression of a faith rooted in love for God, neighbor, and creation (Matt. 22:37–40). As Martin Luther said, "Faith is not idle and not lazy. Faith is living and active, and flows into love". In the context of the ecological crisis, that love flows to polluted rivers, threatened forests, and the damaged atmosphere.

2. Hope for a New Creation and Cosmic Eschatology

The culmination of the theology of cosmic repentance lies not in ecological pessimism, but in the eschatological hope for a new creation. Romans 8:19–22 shows that all creation waits with eager longing for the moment "the children of God are revealed," because it is then that creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and enter into glory. This hope is the spiritual foundation for those who strive in ecological repentance: that the suffering of creation is not in vain, but is part of the process of the cosmos's rebirth.

In Reformation theology, John Calvin stated that "this world is the stage of God's glory, and it will one day be restored in its more perfect form" (Calvin, 1998). Therefore, ecological restoration is not a futile work but part of the participation in the process toward the eschatological restoration that God Himself is accomplishing. Calvin even emphasized that "creation also bears the consequences of human sin," and for that reason, the restoration of humanity and the world are two sides of one divine salvation.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, invites the church to cultivate what is called "ecological hope," which is united with a spirituality of patience, faithfulness, and joy in awaiting the restoration of creation.

This is consistent with the thought of Ernst Conradie, who stated that in ecological spirituality, hope is not merely "for the world," but also "with the world" (Conradie, 2006; Lala, 2025).

This spirituality revives the calling of the church as the proleptic Body of Christ—presenting God's future in the midst of the present world. In liturgy, teaching, and concrete action, the church becomes a sign and instrument of the new creation that is approaching (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1–5).

Thus, spirituality and eschatological hope in the ecological crisis:

- Cultivate an awareness of God's presence in a wounded world.
- Encourage the faithful to live in repentance and ecological love.
- Provide a theological foundation to persevere in hope.
- And strengthen the fellowship of the faithful as a restoring community with the Holy Spirit.

Cosmic repentance does not end in guilt or idealism, but in a holy life full of love and hope for a new world where heaven and earth are united in the peace and glory of God.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary ecological crisis cannot be separated from a deeper theological problem, namely, human sin against creation and against the Holy Spirit who brings forth and sustains life. Through the development of the concept of ecological sin, this paper demonstrates that ecological damage is a tangible form of rebellion against the Triune God—through the destruction of the work of the Word, the denial of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the betrayal of the *imago Dei* mandate. This sin is spiritual, structural, and cosmic in nature, and therefore its resolution must also be comprehensive and theological.

By positioning the doctrines of justification and sanctification as its theological foundation, this article expands the scope of soteriology to encompass the human relationship with creation. Justification is understood not only as the restoration of the vertical relationship with God but also as the restoration of humanity's identity as servants of creation. Sanctification, on the other hand, is the process of life's transformation toward the care and restoration of the earth as God's home. Together, they form the basis for cosmic repentance, which contains both passive (ceasing to destroy) and active (loving and restoring creation) dimensions.

The Church, as the body of Christ and a community governed by the Holy Spirit, has a central role in this movement of cosmic repentance. Through an ecological spirituality formed in faith, love, and eschatological hope, believers are called to be a sign of God's ongoing restoration in the midst of a wounded world. The restoration of creation is not merely an ethical project but an integral part of the salvation accomplished by God in Christ and fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. Thus, a

theology that addresses the ecological crisis is not a deviation from classic doctrine, but rather the fulfillment of a living faith—one that places love for God, neighbor, and all of creation in an inseparable unity.

REFERENSI

- Adiprasetya, J. (2023). *Berteologi dalam Iman: Dasar-dasar Teologi Sistematis-Konstruktif*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Calvin, J. (1998). *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 1* (Ford Lewis Battles (ed.)). The Westminster Press.
- _____. (1998). *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 2* (Ford Lewis Battles (ed.)). The Westminster Press.
- _____. (1998). *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 3* (Ford Lewis Battles (ed.)). The Westminster Press.
- _____. (1998a). *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 4* (Ford Lewis Battles (ed.)). The Westminster Press.
- Conradie, E. M. (2006). *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research*. African Sun Media.
- Ellis, G. N., & Wheaton, I. (2009). Distinction Without Separation: The Milieu of John Calvin's Doctrine of Union with Christ and the Duplex Gratia of Justification and Sanctification. In *Wheaton College Graduate School*.
- Görföl, T. (2025). A Doctrinal and Practical Continuity: Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis on the Ecological Crisis. *Religions*, 16(2).
- Habel, N. C. (2001). The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets. In *Paper Knowledge . Toward a Media History of Documents*. Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, Mansion House.
- Lahtinen, H. (2025). Beyond the Anthropocene: Construction of Human Agency within Lutheran Eco-Theology. *Dialog*, 1–7.
- Lala, I. (2025). Eco-Theological Anthropology in Christianity: Imago Dei and Ecological Preservation. *HTS Theological Studies*, 81(1), 1–8.
- Luther, M. (1531). Commentary On St. Paul's Epistle to The Galatians. In P. S. WATSON (Ed.), *The University of Wittenberg*.
- _____. (1961). The Freedom of a Christian. In *The Freedom of a Christian*.
- Mics, F. (2025). The Importance of Forests and Natural Habitats-Ecotheological and Human-Ecological Aspects. *Opuscula Theologica et Scientifica*, 3(1), 75–95.
- Pihkala, P. (2025). Ecological Grief, Religious Coping, And Spiritual Crises: Exploring Eco-

Spiritual Grief. *Pastoral Psychology*, 74(1), 69–96.

Runtuwene, H. C. M. (2025). Ecotheology: Integrating Faith, Creation Care, and Contextual Practice in Indonesian Protestant Congregations. *Educatio Christi*, 6(1), 145–170.

Sadowski, R. (2025). The Role of Christianity in Ecological Awakening: Foundations for Christians' Sustainable Behavior Toward Nature. *Problemy Ekorozwoju*, 20(1), 15–24.

Scaer, D. P. (1985). Sanctification in Lutheran Theology. *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 49(2–3), 181–195.

Sitohang, B. (2019). Refleksi Kristologi Kosmik Dalam Laku Iman Yang Ekologis. *Jurnal Teologi Anugerah*, 8(2), 53–72.

Snider, A. V. (2010). Sanctification and Justification: A Unity of Distinctions. *Master's Seminary Journal*, 21(1), 59–26.

Tappert, T. G. (2016). *Buku Konkord: Konfesi Gereja Lutheran*. BPK Gunung Mulia.

Williams, D. T. (2013). Ecological Disharmony as the Sin Against the Spirit. *Scriptura: Journal for Contextual Hermeneutics in Southern Africa*, 112(1), 1–13.