

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: EMERGING TRENDS IN CHRISTIAN ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Destruction and dilapidation of Earth's ecology and natural capital in the present ethos is leading theologians and ethicists to seek the support of religious scriptures and theology for the growth of ecological sustainability and environmental ethics. The ecological response to Biblical ideas has facilitated the birth of an eco-theology which suggests the notion of responsible stewardship. Biblical attitude and principles have primarily been believed to have a destructive tendency towards nature and condemned for being the key root to ecological crisis. This notion not only questions the assumptions made about God's relation with the world, created by Him in His own image, but also claims a major conflict between environmental ethics and Christian theology. Hence the Biblical basis for preservation and conservation of Nature needs to be deeply explored in order to re-establish the ecological connection between Man and the Eternal Being.

Christianity has a long historical relation with nature and humanity. Christian Ecological ethics focuses its attention on the Christian scriptures, liturgical and spiritual practices centred on environmental conservation. The doctrine of stewardship occurring in Genesis points out man's role of stewardship rather than ownership, entrusting him the responsibility of guarding nature by opposing policies and practices which pose a threat to the ecosystem. The Prophetic Books in the Old Testament reveal nature's major role in the revelation of God's purpose on Earth. Its destruction is also symbolic of the declining relation between God and humans. The relation between God, Man and Nature remains indispensable. In this paper, I intend to use the theological response to environmental crisis, re-examining the Biblical and ecclesiastical customs and traditions in ecological terms and thereby bring certain Biblical texts into sharp focus in order to explore and reinforce the unalterable and consistent affiliation between spirituality and cosmology.

KEYWORDS: Stewardship, Eco-Theology, Environmental Ethics, Ecclesiastical Customs