



ECOTHEOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT OF ECOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WORLD RELIGIONS AND THE BADUY INDIGENOUS TRADITION

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Abstract

The contemporary global ecological crisis is driven by multiple factors, including a profound ethical crisis in the human-nature relationship. In this context, religious ethics assumes a significant normative responsibility. This study aims to analyze ecotheology as a form of religious ethics that embodies a spirit of ecology through a comparative approach encompassing both world religions and an indigenous religion. The research employs a qualitative method with a library research design and a conceptual-comparative analysis of theological sources within Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the indigenous religion of the Baduy community, as well as academic scholarship addressing the relationship between religion and ecology. The findings indicate that each religious tradition possesses a robust ethical foundation for responding to the ecological crisis, albeit grounded in distinct theological and cosmological orientations. Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism emphasize the theological mandate of humans as stewards of God's creation through the concepts of khalifah, stewardship, and the notion of the common home as normative bases of ecotheology. Meanwhile, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism develop ecotheological perspectives rooted in relational cosmology, cosmic harmony, interdependence, and moral moderation. Beyond the world religions, the indigenous religion of Baduy demonstrates a lived and praxis-oriented form of ecotheology expressed through customary law, ecological taboos, and sustainability practices grounded in ancestral tradition. This article argues that ecotheology is not exclusive to a particular tradition but emerges across diverse religious communities, both world religions and indigenous faiths, as an inherent ethical framework aligned with the spirit of ecology.

Keywords: *Ecotheology, Religious Ethics, Ecological Crisis*

Abstrak

Krisis ekologis global kontemporer didorong oleh berbagai faktor, termasuk krisis etika yang mendalam dalam relasi manusia dan alam. Dalam konteks ini, etika keagamaan memikul tanggung jawab normatif yang signifikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis ekoteologi sebagai suatu bentuk etika keagamaan yang mewujudkan spirit ekologi melalui pendekatan komparatif yang mencakup agama-agama dunia dan satu agama asli. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi kepustakaan serta analisis konseptual-komparatif terhadap sumber-sumber teologis dalam Islam, Protestanisme, Katolik, Hindu, Buddha, Konghucu, dan agama asli komunitas Baduy, serta kajian akademik yang membahas relasi antara agama dan ekologi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap tradisi keagamaan memiliki landasan etis yang kuat dalam merespons krisis ekologis, meskipun berakar pada orientasi



teologis dan kosmologis yang berbeda. Islam, Protestanisme, dan Katolik menekankan mandat teologis manusia sebagai pengelola ciptaan Tuhan melalui konsep khalifah, stewardship, dan gagasan common home sebagai basis normatif ekoteologi. Sementara itu, Hindu, Buddha, dan Konghucu mengembangkan perspektif ekoteologis yang berakar pada kosmologi relasional, harmoni kosmik, interdependensi, dan moderasi moral. Di luar agama-agama dunia, agama asli Baduy memperlihatkan bentuk ekoteologi yang hidup dan berorientasi praksis, yang diwujudkan melalui hukum adat, pantangan ekologis, dan praktik keberlanjutan berbasis tradisi leluhur. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa ekoteologi bukanlah konstruksi eksklusif dari tradisi tertentu, melainkan hadir dalam beragam komunitas keagamaan, baik agama-agama dunia maupun agama asli, sebagai kerangka etis inheren yang selaras dengan spirit ekologi.

Kata Kunci: *Ekoteologi, Etika Keagamaan, Krisis Ekologis*

A. Introduction

The contemporary ecological crisis represents an urgent global concern, characterized by climate change, air and water pollution, deforestation, land degradation, and the rapid loss of biodiversity. These challenges are not solely ecological in scope; they also have far-reaching social, economic, and political implications for communities worldwide. Most responses to this crisis have relied heavily on technocratic approaches that emphasize scientific expertise, technological innovation, and rational economic development policies. While such strategies are indispensable, they remain insufficient in addressing the deeper ethical and spiritual foundations that shape exploitative human attitudes toward the natural world. Technocratic frameworks tend to reduce nature to an object of measurement, regulation, and utilization, thereby marginalizing the moral and spiritual dimensions that are essential to a holistic understanding of human-nature relations. Consequently, the resulting solutions are often fragmented and lack the transformative capacity required to foster enduring ecological sustainability (Hidayat et al., 2025).

Within these technocratic limitations, religion emerges as a vital source of moral reasoning and ethical orientation for cultivating a deeper ecological consciousness. The major religious traditions of the world articulate normative frameworks that emphasize human responsibility toward creation, whether through the concept of khalifah in Islam, the doctrine of stewardship in Christian theology, or the ideals of cosmic harmony embedded in Dharmic traditions and indigenous belief systems. Empirical research demonstrates that religious values and practices can inspire community-based environmental initiatives, encourage sustainable modes of living, and nurture an ecological awareness grounded not merely in technical rationality but in moral commitment and spiritual meaning (Madina, 2021; Rani et al., 2025).

Ecotheology has thus developed as an interdisciplinary field that integrates theological reflection with ecological awareness in order to articulate the ethical and



spiritual dimensions of environmental responsibility. Emerging in part as a critique of secular anthropocentrism, which positions humans as the central agents and ultimate controllers of nature, ecotheology reframes the natural world as a morally and spiritually significant reality rather than a mere resource for exploitation. From this perspective, nature is understood as part of a sacred relational order that calls for reverence, care, and ethical accountability. Ecotheological discourse also challenges the modern dualism separating humanity from nature and proposes more inclusive theological frameworks that recognize the intrinsic value of both biotic and abiotic components of the ecological community (Febryanti, 2025; Widiarto & Wilaela, 2021).

Modern ecotheological scholarship is widely rooted in White Jr.'s view, which argues that the modern ecological crisis cannot be separated from the anthropocentric theological legacy of Western Christianity and its religious legitimation of human domination over nature; this article has become a foundational point of departure for critical discourse on the relationship between religion and the environment and has been cited thousands of times across interdisciplinary literature (White, 1967). In response to this critique, Nasr subsequently developed a traditionalist ecotheological approach that asserts the ecological crisis to be fundamentally a spiritual crisis arising from the loss of a sacred cosmological worldview, and he proposes the restoration of environmental ethics grounded in religious metaphysics (Arif, 1997). Another major contribution was made by Berry, who expanded ecotheology toward a religious cosmology and emphasized the need for a new religious narrative that understands the Earth as a sacred community of life rather than merely an object of exploitation (Berry, 2017). An interreligious approach was then systematically advanced by Tucker and Grim, who demonstrated that nearly all major religious traditions contain ethical and spiritual resources relevant to addressing the global ecological crisis, while also promoting interfaith dialogue on environmental issues (Berry et al., 1994). Subsequently, contemporary developments in ecotheology were further strengthened by Jenkins, who situates ecotheology within the framework of public ethics and highlights the role of religion in shaping moral responsibility, ecological justice, and social praxis in the context of modern environmental crises (Jenkins, 2008).

A growing body of research has explored the relationship between religion and environmental concern from an ecotheological perspectives. For example, studies on Christian ecotheology emphasize doctrinal foundations of creation and human responsibility toward nature, as well as the practical implications of these teachings for environmental conservation (Riska, 2024). Research on Islamic ecotheology highlights interpretive efforts to articulate the concepts of khalifah and divine trust (amanah) as ethical foundations for environmental stewardship within Islamic tradition (Mardhiah et al., 2014; Syaifulloh, 2025). Comparative studies have examined ecotheological narratives within sacred texts across multiple religious traditions, demonstrating that nearly all traditions possess doctrinal resources relevant to contemporary environmental issues (Bowode, 2025). In addition, studies on faith-based environmental movements,



such as ecological initiatives within Muhammadiyah, illustrate how ecotheological values are operationalized in contemporary religious and social practices (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, this article addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by presenting a theological-comparative analysis of both world religions and an indigenous religious tradition, thereby expanding the understanding of ecotheology as a form of religious ethics aligned with the spirit of ecology. It examines religious traditions as foundational bases for ecotheological ethics that inform human responses to the global ecological crisis. In doing so, this study contributes to bridging academic scholarship and religious praxis in ways that are relevant to environmentally oriented policy formulation and religious-based ecological advocacy. From an academic perspective, the research advances the field of religion and ecology by synthesizing ecotheological discourses across diverse religious traditions, thereby enriching interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersection of religious studies, ecological thought, and related fields.

Against this background, the article raises the central research question of how the ethical foundations within both world religions and indigenous religious traditions relate to and cultivate a spirit of ecology. The study seeks to uncover the ecotheological foundations that function as responses to the contemporary ecological crisis, while also examining how religious worldviews articulate ecological understanding and environmental responsibility within their respective religious communities.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design and a conceptual-comparative analytical framework. This approach is adopted because the primary objective of the research is not to test empirical hypotheses, but rather to understand, interpret, and compare religious ethics concerning the relationship between humans and nature across diverse religious traditions as a spirit of ecology. The scope of this study is limited to Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the indigenous religion of the Baduy people. The selection of these six world religions is based on their status as the major religions adhered to by the Indonesian population, while the Baduy tradition is included as an indigenous religious community that consistently practices an ecologically grounded belief system.

Methodologically, this research draws upon Creswell's perspective (2017), which emphasizes that qualitative inquiry aims to understand meanings constructed from texts and social contexts through in-depth and reflective analysis. This study seeks to interpret the ecotheological meaning embedded in religious ethics, both at the textual and contextual levels, as an expression of a spirit of ecology. The research data are derived from various primary and secondary sources, including sacred scriptures, ecclesiastical encyclicals, theological texts, as well as books and journal articles addressing ecotheology, environmental ethics, and world religions. The literature is purposively selected based on its conceptual relevance, academic authority, and contribution to scholarly discourse on religion and ecology.



Data analysis is conducted through content analysis and comparative analysis. Content analysis is employed to identify key concepts, including theological foundations, the ontological status of nature, and ecological ethics within each religious tradition. Data interpretation is undertaken in an interpretative, critical manner by situating religious texts and ideas within the context of contemporary environmental crises. This approach enables the study to demonstrate that religious ethics function not merely as normative systems of belief, but also as sources of value that cultivate a spirit of ecology and shape ecological consciousness within religious communities.

C. Results and Discussion

Ecotheology is a theological discipline that examines the reciprocal relationship between theology and ecology, particularly how religion and belief systems shape human understandings of nature and responsibilities toward the environment. Etymologically, the term is derived from the combination of “ecology” (from *oikos*, meaning home or habitat) and “theology” (from *theos*, meaning God, and *logos*, meaning study or discourse). Conceptually, ecotheology thus refers to the study of the relationship between creation (nature) and the Creator (God) within the framework of environmental concern and humanity’s moral responsibility toward the universe. Ecotheology affirms that the natural world is not merely an object of human utilization but an integral part of a cosmic system that bears a spiritual relationship to God and intrinsic moral value that must be respected by humanity. Similar definitions are articulated in theological scholarship that positions ecotheology as a form of theological reflection on contemporary ecological challenges and as a spiritual response to the global environmental crisis (Lumbantobing & Purba, 2022). Moreover, in the Indonesian context, ecotheology has become a significant issue since the current Minister of Religious Affairs (2024-present), Nasaruddin Umar, popularized this concept within the policy priorities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Ruswanda, 2025).

Meanwhile, within the context of this study, religious ethics is understood as a normative system derived from sacred texts, traditions, and religious authorities that regulates human relationships with God, with others, and with nature. Operationally, it can be analyzed through moral principles, categories of obligation and prohibition, and virtues that shape the ecological behavior of religious communities. The term of spirit of ecology refers to the internal and dispositional dimension of such ethics, namely an ecological consciousness that is internalized as a value orientation, a cosmological worldview, and a practical commitment to sustainability. It is not merely a set of normative teachings, but an ethical habitus embodied in social practices, rituals, and the broader patterns of communal life.

The relationship between theology and ecology situates ecotheology at the intersection of religious thought and concern for environmental sustainability. Within this discourse, theology does not only address God and religious doctrines but also examines how these teachings shape the environmental ethics of religious communities.



Ecotheology has developed as a critique of anthropocentric perspectives that have long been regarded as the root of exploitative human behavior toward nature. By understanding nature as God's creation endowed with intrinsic value rather than merely as an economic resource, ecotheology provides a normative foundation for a more holistic and transformative environmental ethic (Sumule, 2024; Yuono, 2019). The following section elaborates ecotheology in terms of its religious ethics and spirit of ecology within Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the Baduy indigenous religion.

1. Ecotheology in Islam

In Islamic tradition, the roots of ecotheology are grounded in the concept of *khalīfah*, which affirms that human beings are appointed as God's vicegerents on earth, bearing moral and spiritual responsibility for maintaining and preserving the balance of nature. This theological mandate is explicitly articulated in the Qur'an when God declares to the angels: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority (*khalīfah*)" (Qur'an 2:30). This verse indicates that humanity's position is not that of absolute dominion over nature, but rather that of responsible stewardship, entrusted with safeguarding ecological balance in a just and accountable manner.

In line with this mandate, the Qur'an consistently condemns acts of *fasād* (corruption or destruction) on earth. This prohibition is stated explicitly, for example, in Qur'an 2:60: "...and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption" (Sahih International). Similar ethical imperatives are reiterated across numerous other verses, including Qur'an 2:205; 4:29; 5:32; 7:56, 58, and 74; 11:85; 28:77; 30:41; and 38:27–28. Collectively, these verses demonstrate the coherence of Islamic teachings in rejecting destructive exploitation of nature and in affirming the obligation to preserve the divinely ordained order of creation (Naja, 2025).

Islamic ecotheological studies emphasize that the concepts of *khalīfah*, *amānah* (divine trust), cosmic balance (*mīzān*), and the prohibition of *fasād* constitute the normative foundations of environmental ethics in contemporary Islamic thought. Environmental protection is thus understood not merely as a social obligation, but as a divine trust that carries profound moral and spiritual significance. Accordingly, the human–nature relationship is situated within a framework of religious accountability in which ecological responsibility is inseparable from obedience to God (Ibadulloh & Mutaqin, 2023).

From a hermeneutical perspective, Qur'anic verses that emphasize the avoidance of destruction and the maintenance of balance are frequently interpreted as the ethical foundations of Islamic environmental thought. Interpretations of human identity as *khalīfah* imply that every human action toward nature carries ethical and spiritual consequences. Comparative studies further indicate that Islam contains inherent ecological values that reject destructive exploitation and position humanity as the guardian of God's creation rather than its destroyer (Rusmiati et al., 2023).



Thus, Islamic ecotheology is fundamentally theocentric and normative, viewing nature as God's creation endowed with order and balance (*mīzān*) that must be safeguarded by human beings. Environmental ethics in Islam therefore constitute an integral dimension of religious obedience, and the contemporary ecological crisis can be understood as a manifestation of humanity's failure to fulfill the divine trust (*amānah*) ethically and responsibly (Arif, 1997; Foltz et al., 2001).

2. Ecotheology in Protestantism

Protestant Christian ecotheology emphasizes the concept of stewardship as the foundational principle of environmental ethics. This concept is firmly rooted in the biblical creation narrative, particularly in Genesis 2:15, which states: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." This verse theologically affirms that human beings are not the absolute owners of nature, but divinely appointed stewards entrusted with the responsibility to care for and preserve creation as an act of obedience to God (KMUTT Sustainability, 2025).

Within the Protestant tradition, nature is not merely perceived as the backdrop of salvation history, but as an integral component of God's creation entrusted to humanity. The mandate of stewardship is understood as a moral calling that integrates Christian faith with ecological responsibility, particularly in the context of contemporary environmental crises. Protestant ecotheological literature emphasizes that environmental care represents a concrete expression of lived faith, in which the human relationship with God is reflected in the manner in which creation is treated (Farhan & Hadisaputra, 2022).

The ecotheological foundations of Protestantism emerge from a theological reading of the Book of Genesis that positions human beings as guardians of the created order rather than as agents of arbitrary exploitation. Although Christian theology has historically been criticized for fostering anthropocentric interpretations that legitimize human domination over nature, Protestant ecotheology maintains stewardship as a corrective and normative moral framework. Within this framework, dominion is reinterpreted as ethical responsibility and accountable management rather than as a theological justification for destructive exploitation (Maulana et al., 2024).

Protestant ecotheology has thus developed as an internal theological critique of interpretations that place humanity in a hierarchically superior and exploitative position over the rest of creation. Protestant theologians underscore that caring for the environment constitutes an essential dimension of religious obedience, moral responsibility toward God, and an expression of love for fellow creatures. Consequently, Christian ecology within the Protestant tradition is not merely moral or pragmatic in orientation, but fundamentally theological and normative, grounded in the confession of God as Creator and humanity as steward of creation (Conradie, 2006; DeWitt, 2008)

3. Ecotheology in Catholicism



The Catholic tradition explicitly affirms ecological responsibility through a range of theological and pastoral documents, most notably the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015). This document emphasizes that the Earth is our “common home,” which must be cared for and protected by all humanity in a spirit of love, justice, and moral responsibility. The theological foundations of this perspective can also be traced to Genesis 1:28, which, within Catholic interpretation, is not understood as legitimizing exploitative domination over nature but rather as a normative mandate for ethical responsibility in the prudent governance and care of God’s creation. This perspective has been widely discussed in interreligious ecotheological studies that connect Catholic doctrine with the ecological responsibilities of other religious traditions (Orindevisa, 2025).

Within the Catholic theological framework, all creation is understood as a divine gift endowed with intrinsic value and dignity that must be respected. Nature is not treated merely as a commodity but as a shared living space that sustains the relationship between humanity, God, and the rest of creation. Accordingly, the status of nature in Catholic thought is that of God’s creation as a common home for all living beings, whose sustainability must be safeguarded to preserve both ecological integrity and human dignity. This understanding expands the concept of stewardship into an ethical commitment oriented toward collective well-being and long-term sustainability.

Laudato Si' further develops the concept of integral ecology, which emphasizes the inseparable connection between ecological degradation, social injustice, and broader moral crises. From this perspective, environmental destruction cannot be separated from human suffering, particularly that experienced by the poor and by future generations. Consequently, Catholic environmental ethics emphasize love, socio-ecological solidarity, and intergenerational justice as their core normative principles. Environmental concern is thus framed as an expression of Christian faith that calls for ecological conversion, a profound transformation of attitudes, lifestyles, and unsustainable social structures (Francis, 2015; Jenkins, 2008).

Through this approach, Catholic ecotheology offers not only normative theological reflection but also practical engagement in public policy, environmental advocacy, and interfaith dialogue. By framing the Earth as a common home, the Catholic tradition extends the meaning of stewardship into a global responsibility that transcends religious and cultural boundaries, while affirming environmental ethics as an integral dimension of the spiritual and moral vocation of Catholic believers in responding to the global ecological crisis (Toha, 2025).

4. Ecotheology in Hinduism

In the Hindu tradition, ecotheology is deeply rooted in cosmological and ontological perspectives that situate human beings and nature within a sacred cosmic order. Hindu agrarian-cosmic teachings emphasize harmony between humanity and the natural world as a manifestation of cosmic order (*ṛta*) and the moral principle of *dharma*. The Vedas and the Upanishads consistently portray the environment as an integral



dimension of human existence rather than as a separate entity available for unrestricted exploitation.

One of the central ethical concepts in Hinduism is ahimsa, the principle of non-violence toward all living beings, which emerges in the Vedic and Upanishadic traditions. This principle governs not only interpersonal relations but also the relationship between humans and the natural world. Ahimsa reflects the belief that every component of nature possesses intrinsic value and an inherent right to exist and be respected, thereby framing environmental treatment as a moral and spiritual responsibility.

This ethical framework is reinforced by the Hindu understanding that humanity and nature constitute an interconnected unity mediated through interrelated cosmic elements. Human conduct toward the environment is therefore understood as an expression of spiritual dharma, insofar as caring for nature entails preserving the harmony of the cosmic order grounded in divine reality (Jain, 2025). Within this framework, the human-nature relationship is not merely normative or ethical, but fundamentally cosmological and ontological.

The concept of Tri Hita Karana, particularly developed within Balinese Hinduism, further underscores the interconnectedness of humans, the Divine, and the natural environment. Rooted in Vedic traditions and philosophical Hindu texts that emphasize ṛta as cosmic order and dharma as moral obligation, this concept affirms that human beings bear a spiritual responsibility to maintain ecological harmony as a manifestation of a God-centered cosmic reality. Interreligious ecotheological studies affirm that Hindu ecological thought is grounded in the understanding of nature as a sacred component of the cosmic structure of life that must be respected and sustained (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

In the Vedic scriptures, the Earth is personified as Bhūmi Devi, the cosmic mother who sustains life and therefore must be honored and protected, as articulated in Atharva Veda 12.1. Similarly, Bhagavad Gita 3:14 emphasizes the interdependence of human action, ritual sacrifice (yajña), and the continuity of natural cycles. Consequently, Hindu environmental ethics are both ontological and ritualistic: caring for nature is synonymous with maintaining cosmic equilibrium. Scholarly analyses affirm that Hinduism provides a robust spiritual foundation for an ecotheology grounded in the unity of humanity, nature, and the Divine (Prime, 1992).

5. Ecotheology in Buddhism

The Buddhist tradition places the principle of interdependence (pratītyasamutpāda or paticca samuppāda) at the core of its ecological ethics. This principle affirms that all phenomena, both living beings and elements of nature, arise and exist through mutual dependence. Although canonical Buddhist texts such as the Tripiṭaka do not address the “environment” in modern terminology, fundamental Buddhist teachings contain strong ecological implications, particularly through the principles of ahimsā (non-violence) and karuṇā (compassion) toward all living beings.



Within the Buddhist framework, this understanding of universal interconnectedness has direct consequences for environmental ethics. Environmental degradation is not viewed merely as a technical or managerial problem, but as a manifestation of the human mental condition, especially greed (*taṇhā*), spiritual ignorance (*avijjā*), and excessive attachment. Consequently, any human action that harms nature is understood to affect the entire web of life, including humanity itself. This perspective situates environmental protection as an integral dimension of Buddhist moral and spiritual practice.

In everyday practice, Buddhist teachings encourage simplicity of life, self-restraint, and respect for all forms of life. These values are directly relevant to environmental conservation, as they reject excessive consumption and the exploitative use of natural resources. Buddhist ethics does not rely on divine command but emphasizes inner transformation and awareness of the existential interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. Accordingly, caring for the environment is understood as a natural consequence of moral awakening and spiritual cultivation.

Contemporary ecotheological scholarship affirms that Buddhism provides a significant moral foundation for global environmental ethics. Teachings articulated in *Dhammapada* 129-130, together with the principles of *ahiṃsā* and *paticca samuppāda*, present a vision of nature as an interconnected web of life. From this vision emerge ethical commitments to universal compassion, non-violence, and simplicity of living as distinctly Buddhist responses to the modern ecological crisis (Heine, 2001; Kaza, 2003; Rusmiati et al., 2023).

6. Ecotheology in Confucianism

The Confucian tradition places harmony between humans and nature at the core of its ethical and spiritual framework, grounded in the principle of *Tian-Ren He Yi* (the unity of Heaven and humanity). This principle affirms that human life must be conducted in accordance with the cosmic and moral order of nature, such that human behavior cannot be separated from the harmony of the universe. Classical Confucian texts, particularly the teachings of Confucius (*Kongzi*), emphasize balance, moderation, self-restraint, and respect for nature as integral components of social and spiritual ethics (Toha, 2025). Consequently, Confucian ethics extend beyond interpersonal relations to encompass humanity's moral responsibility to live in harmony with the natural environment and to respect the cosmic forces that sustain life.

Within the Confucian ethical framework, nature is not conceived as an object of exploitation but as an integral part of the cosmic moral order that unites Heaven (*Tian*), humanity (*Ren*), and Earth. The principle of *Tian-Ren He Yi* provides a normative foundation for understanding that humans are called to live within nature rather than above it. Accordingly, Confucian environmental ethics are articulated through the cultivation of virtue (*ren*), social balance, and moderation in action. Contemporary studies on Confucian environmental ethics indicate that although Confucian ecotheology is less



explicitly articulated than in Abrahamic traditions, Confucian values offer a significant ethical framework for addressing modern environmental challenges, particularly through the integration of morality, cosmology, and the human-nature relationship (Sellmann, 2025).

From a theological-philosophical perspective, the roots of Confucian ecotheology lie in the understanding of nature as part of a cosmic moral order that must be preserved through virtuous practice and social harmony. Confucian environmental ethics emphasize moderation, self-discipline, and balance as foundational principles governing the human-nature relationship. Scholarly literature affirms that Confucianism provides a virtue-based ecological ethical model that remains highly relevant to contemporary societies, especially in responding to environmental crises that require moral transformation and changes in human attitudes and lifestyles (Thompson & Wei-Ming, 1987; Tu, 1998). Within this framework, normative references such as Analects 6:23 and the concept of Tian-Ren He Yi illustrate that nature is understood as part of the cosmic moral order of Heaven-Humanity-Earth, which calls for the harmonization of human-nature relationship through virtue and moderation as the ethical foundation of Confucian ecotheology.

7. Ecotheology in Baduy indigenous religion

The Baduy indigenous religion, rooted in the Sunda Wiwitan tradition, conceptualizes nature as a sacred entity that is inseparable from the spiritual, social, and cultural life of the community. Within this worldview, nature is not understood merely as a resource to be exploited, but as an integral part of a cosmic order whose balance must be preserved. The principal framework governing the human-nature relationship is embodied in pikukuh karuhun, a set of unwritten ancestral customary rules that are binding and transmitted across generations. These customary norms explicitly prohibit actions that damage forests, rivers, mountains, and other natural elements, thereby rendering environmental preservation a spiritual as well as moral obligation for the Baduy community.

As a local cosmological system, the Baduy indigenous religion demonstrates a relational and sacred understanding of the human-nature relationship. The customary division of forest zones, such as leuweung kolot (sacred or forbidden forests), reflects a sophisticated ecological awareness and functions as an indigenous conservation mechanism. In this context, nature is not perceived as an object of human domination but as a constituent of socio-spiritual life, deeply interconnected with ancestral spirits and cosmic forces. Studies on Baduy local wisdom indicate that these customary prohibitions and prudent resource management practices produce effective and sustainable conservation outcomes, exemplifying a form of lived or practical ecotheology embedded in everyday life (Suparmini et al., 2015).

Unlike doctrinal religions that articulate ecotheology through formal theological texts, ecotheology in the Baduy indigenous religion is not codified in normative scriptures but is enacted through daily practices that have proven effective in sustaining ecological

balance. Prohibitions against environmental destruction function not merely as social norms but as spiritual obligations consistently observed by the community. Anthropological research confirms that the Baduy indigenous religion represents a concrete example of how local religio-cosmological values can generate robust environmental ethics and contribute significantly to ecosystem sustainability. Accordingly, the Baduy tradition offers a distinctive model of indigenous ecotheology grounded in customary law, taboos, and lived practices that emphasize harmony between humans and nature (Iskandar, 2022; Permana et al., 2011).

The following table presents a comparative overview of ecotheological foundations across major world religions and indigenous belief systems, highlighting their respective scriptural or doctrinal bases. It illustrates how each tradition conceptualizes the theological status of nature and articulates ethical principles that guide human responsibility toward environmental preservation

Religion	Theological Basis	Status of Nature	Ecological Ethics
Islam	Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30 (khalifah); Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:56 (prohibition of fasād)	God's creation (makhlūq) governed by cosmic balance (mīzān)	Moral-spiritual trust (amānah); responsibility to protect and avoid destruction
Protestant Christianity	Genesis 2:15 (to till and keep the garden)	God's creation entrusted to human beings	Stewardship; moral responsibility and creation care
Catholicism	Encyclical Laudato Si' (2015); Genesis 1:28	God's creation as a "common home"	Ethics of love, socio-ecological solidarity, and intergenerational justice
Hinduism	Atharva Veda 12.1; Bhagavad Gita 3:14	Nature as part of a sacred cosmos and a manifestation of the divine	Cosmic obligation (dharma), ritual harmony, and reverence for nature
Buddhism	Dhammapada 129-130; principles of ahimsa and paticca samuppāda	An interdependent web of life	Universal compassion, non-violence, and simplicity of life
Confucianism	Analects 6:23; concept of Tian-Ren He Yi	Part of the cosmic moral order (Heaven-Humanity-Earth)	Harmonization of humans and nature through virtue and moderation
Baduy Indigenous Religion	Pikukuh karuhun; customary prohibitions against environmental destruction	Nature as a sacred entity within socio-spiritual life	Customary-based ecological preservation, taboos, and sustainable life practices

A comparative analysis of the Abrahamic religious traditions, Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholicism, reveals that their ecotheological frameworks are grounded in strong normative and doctrinal foundations. The Islamic concept of khalifah, the Protestant notion of stewardship, and the Catholic understanding of the Earth as a common home theologically position human beings as moral agents accountable to God in their relationship with nature. Nature is understood as God's creation, endowed with cosmic order and intrinsic value; therefore, destructive exploitation is regarded as an ethical and spiritual violation. Within these traditions, environmental ethics are



fundamentally theocentric and normative, framing ecological responsibility as an expression of religious obedience and moral accountability toward creation.

In contrast, cosmological traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism provide ontological and relational foundations for ecotheology. Hinduism conceptualizes nature as an integral part of a sacred cosmos and a manifestation of divine reality governed by the principles of *ṛta* and *dharma*. Buddhism emphasizes the doctrine of interdependence (*paticca samuppāda*), which affirms that all beings exist within an interconnected web of life, rendering environmental degradation a consequence of greed and spiritual ignorance. Confucianism, through the principle of *Tian-Ren He Yi*, underscores cosmic harmony by situating nature within the moral order of Heaven-Humanity-Earth. Collectively, these traditions demonstrate that ecotheology need not be grounded solely in divine command, but may also emerge from cosmological consciousness and virtue-based ethics that emphasize relational harmony between humans and the natural world.

Beyond the major world religions, local belief systems such as the Baduy indigenous religion (Sunda Wiwitan) exemplify a form of lived or practical ecotheology that is both resilient and effective. In this tradition, nature is regarded as a sacred entity embedded within the social and spiritual life of the community, with *pikukuh karuhun* (ancestral customary laws) functioning as ethical and ecological regulators of human–nature relations. Although not articulated through formal theological doctrines, customary prohibitions against environmental destruction, sacred forest zoning, and practices of modest living have produced sustainable conservation outcomes. This case illustrates that ecotheology does not necessarily require systematic theological formulation; rather, it can be embodied through indigenous values and everyday practices that reflect a deeply rooted religio-ecological relationship conducive to long-term environmental preservation.

D. Conclusion

This article affirms that ecotheology, as reflected in religious ethics and the spirit of ecology, constitutes a relevant and significant approach to addressing the multidimensional global environmental crisis, both ecological and ethical. Through a comparative analysis across religious traditions, the study demonstrates that religious ethics fundamentally provide normative justification for a spirit of ecology capable of shaping theological and ecological consciousness, thereby influencing how humans understand and redefine the human-nature relationship. In this regard, ecotheology functions as a bridge between religious belief systems and ecological praxis oriented toward environmental sustainability.

The analysis of diverse religious traditions reveals that religious ethics serve as the primary foundation for the formation of the spirit of ecology. Islamic, Protestant, and Catholic traditions emphasize humanity's theological mandate as stewards of God's creation, while Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism underscore principles of cosmic



interconnectedness, harmony, and moderation as the basis of ecological ethics. Meanwhile, the indigenous Baduy religion demonstrates a lived and praxis-oriented form of ecotheology expressed through customary law, taboos, and traditional sustainability practices that effectively maintain environmental balance. This plurality of religious ethics indicates that the spirit of ecology is manifested through various religious expressions, both within world religions and indigenous traditions. Accordingly, the article concludes that ecotheology, emerging from the plurality of religious ethical systems, is intrinsically aligned with the spirit of ecology and may serve as a foundational framework for addressing the global ecological crisis. Such an orientation, however, requires a shared commitment among all religious traditions.

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