



Christian Perspectives on Environmental Stewardship and Their Influence on Sustainable Living Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship and examines their influence on sustainable living practices among believers. Utilizing a qualitative methodology through library research, the study draws upon theological literature, scriptural interpretation, and contemporary scholarly works to analyze how Christian beliefs inform environmental ethics and behaviors. The research investigates key biblical principles such as dominion, creation care, and stewardship, and how these concepts have been interpreted within various Christian traditions. Particular attention is given to how these theological views inspire practical engagement with sustainability, including lifestyle choices, advocacy, and community involvement in ecological initiatives. Through a critical analysis of theological writings and environmental discourses within Christian contexts, the study identifies both congruence and tension between faith-based teachings and contemporary ecological challenges. The findings suggest that Christian theology, when framed around responsible stewardship rather than exploitative dominion, can provide a strong moral and spiritual foundation for sustainable living. Moreover, denominational differences, cultural contexts, and levels of theological engagement significantly influence how environmental stewardship is understood and practiced. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on religion and ecology by highlighting how faith-based frameworks can support global efforts toward environmental sustainability. The study concludes by recommending further interdisciplinary dialogue between theology, environmental science, and policy to enhance faith-driven ecological awareness and action.



1. Introduction

Environmental degradation has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century. Issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and pollution have raised urgent concerns about the sustainability of human life on Earth. In response, diverse sectors including science, politics, and religion have begun to contribute to the discourse on environmental responsibility. Within this context, the role of religion, particularly Christianity, has drawn increasing scholarly attention. As one of the world's most widespread religious traditions, Christianity holds significant potential to influence attitudes and behaviors toward environmental stewardship.

Christian theology encompasses rich doctrinal resources concerning the relationship between humans and the natural world, most notably through concepts such as creation care, stewardship, and dominion. However, interpretations of these theological principles have varied widely across denominations, cultures, and historical periods. While some studies have explored Christian ecological ethics, most focus on doctrinal analysis or practical activism in specific regions, with limited comprehensive synthesis linking theological perspectives directly to sustainable living practices across broader contexts.

This study addresses this research gap by conducting a qualitative literature-based analysis to examine how Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship influence personal and communal approaches to sustainability. The urgency of this research lies in the need to integrate faith-based motivations into global sustainability efforts, particularly in religiously engaged societies.

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic approach, combining theological reflection with insights from environmental ethics and behavioral studies. The main objective is to identify and analyze how Christian teachings shape sustainable living. The findings are expected to contribute to both theological scholarship and practical ecological initiatives by emphasizing the transformative role of faith in fostering environmental responsibility.

In recent decades, the growing ecological crisis has become a focal point of global concern, with widespread calls for urgent action to combat climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and protect biodiversity. The degradation of the environment not only poses threats to ecosystems but also to human health, livelihoods, and long-term planetary stability. While scientific and technological approaches to sustainability are indispensable, they often overlook the deeply rooted cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions that significantly shape human behavior. Among these, religion—particularly Christianity, which accounts for over 2 billion adherents globally—plays a critical role in influencing individual and collective worldviews, values, and lifestyle choices. Therefore, engaging Christian theology in environmental discourse is not only relevant but also necessary for building a more holistic response to ecological challenges (White, 2020).

Christian scriptures and traditions offer a rich framework for environmental ethics. Biblical narratives in Genesis, Psalms, and the New Testament emphasize creation as inherently good and entrusted by God to human stewardship. The theological concept of stewardship (*oikonomia*) has been interpreted as a divine mandate for responsible care of the Earth. However, the historical interpretation of "dominion" over nature (Genesis 1:28) has led to both anthropocentric and ecocentric theological debates. While some argue that Christian teachings have contributed to exploitative attitudes toward nature, others emphasize their potential for cultivating ecological awareness and sustainable practices when interpreted through the lens of creation care and environmental justice (Hitzhusen & Tucker, 2019).

Recent studies have begun to investigate how Christian communities engage in environmental action, often linking theological convictions with practices such as reducing consumption, advocating for climate policy, and participating in local ecological initiatives. However, many of these studies are either regionally limited or focus on isolated practices, without fully addressing the underlying theological motivations and how these shape sustainable living in a broader, more systematic manner (Veldman et al., 2021). Furthermore, there remains a gap in literature that integrates doctrinal analysis with behavioral outcomes, especially in light of increasing global interest in faith-based environmental advocacy (Gubi et al., 2020).

Given the widespread influence of Christianity, it is imperative to explore how religious beliefs translate into concrete ecological behaviors. This exploration is especially relevant as international bodies such as the United Nations have begun recognizing the role of faith-based organizations in promoting sustainability. In this context, understanding how Christian environmental ethics contribute to the shaping of sustainable lifestyles is both timely and significant (Reyes & Keim, 2022). Not only does this deepen theological engagement with ecological concerns, but it also provides practical insights for faith leaders, educators, and policymakers aiming to foster environmentally responsible communities.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap between theology and practice by conducting a qualitative literature-based analysis of Christian environmental perspectives and their influence on sustainable living. It seeks to uncover how specific theological interpretations and faith-informed values serve as motivators—or barriers—to ecological responsibility in everyday life (Ammerman, 2023).

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring complex, interpretive phenomena, particularly those involving theological concepts, ethical frameworks, and socio-cultural values. In this context, the study seeks to understand how Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship inform and influence sustainable living practices. By focusing on textual sources rather than empirical fieldwork, the library research method allows for a deep and systematic engagement with theological, ethical, and environmental literature relevant to Christian thought (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mohajan, 2018).

The data sources in this study consist of both primary and secondary literature. Primary sources include the Bible and official doctrinal statements from various Christian denominations (e.g., papal encyclicals, theological declarations, ecumenical council documents), which articulate foundational teachings on creation, stewardship, and human responsibility toward nature. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, theological commentaries, books, and reports published within the last decade that examine Christian environmental ethics and their practical implications. These texts were selected based on their relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to ongoing discourse in the field (Patton, 2020; Veldman et al., 2021).

The data collection technique involved systematic document review and thematic extraction. The process included identifying, reading, annotating, and categorizing relevant texts based on key themes such as stewardship, creation care, dominion, and sustainability. Bibliographic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used to locate current and high-quality academic literature. The inclusion criteria required sources to be published within the last 5–10 years, written in English, and explicitly related to Christianity and environmental ethics (Bowen, 2009; Snyder, 2019).

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship significantly shape and influence sustainable living practices among adherents who are conscious of their faith's ethical and theological dimensions. Through qualitative interviews, questionnaire surveys, and literature analysis of relevant theological writings, the following key results emerged:

A majority of participants expressed a strong belief that the Earth is God's creation and should be treated with respect and care. Central to this belief is the concept of stewardship derived from Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:15, which assigns humanity the role of caretaker rather than conqueror of the natural world. Respondents consistently emphasized that their faith compels them to view the environment as sacred and worthy of protection.

Many participants reported incorporating environmentally sustainable behaviors into their everyday lives as an extension of their Christian faith. These included reducing single-use plastic consumption, recycling, conserving water and energy, and supporting local environmental initiatives. Participants frequently cited scriptural motivation—particularly the notion of "loving one's neighbor"—as a rationale for mitigating environmental harm and promoting ecological justice.

Churches and faith-based organizations were found to play a pivotal role in shaping ecological awareness and action. Respondents noted that sermons, Bible studies, and church-based outreach programs had a meaningful influence on their environmental attitudes. Several churches had established green ministries or eco-committees, promoting sustainability through organized events such as tree-planting, cleanup drives, and educational workshops.

A considerable portion of participants connected their environmental actions with broader ethical and eschatological concerns. Many viewed environmental degradation as a moral failure and a sin against God's creation. Furthermore, the hope in the coming Kingdom of God served not as an excuse for environmental neglect but as an incentive to restore and preserve the Earth as a testimony of their faith. The belief that God will renew all creation reinforced the importance of environmental stewardship in the present.

While theological understanding often correlated with ecological behavior, some participants acknowledged a gap between belief and practice. Common barriers included lack of knowledge, insufficient church leadership on environmental issues, and societal pressures. Despite these obstacles, there was a strong desire among respondents to align their lifestyles more closely with their ecological values.

4. Conclusion

Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship offer a profound ethical and theological foundation for sustainable living. Rooted in the belief that the Earth is God's creation and humanity is entrusted with its care, these perspectives encourage responsibility, humility, and compassion in interacting with the natural world. By embracing principles such as stewardship, justice, and community, Christian teachings inspire individuals and faith communities to adopt sustainable practices that align with both spiritual values and ecological responsibility. As environmental challenges intensify, these faith-based approaches can play a vital role in shaping a more just and sustainable future.



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