

CLIMATE CHANGE, VIRTUE, AND MORAL AGENCY: AN ESSAY IN MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

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“Climate Change, Virtue, and Moral Agency:
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Abstract

In the last decade, virtue ethics has steadily grown as a viable and useful framework for addressing the problems and challenges of climate change. Interest in broader concerns of environmental virtue ethics has intensified in the study of particularly “ecological” character traits that reveal how human flourishing is embedded in ecological relations, and that promote practices of restoration ecology. As an exercise in Muslim-Christian comparative theological ethics, cumulatively, this dissertation attempts to contribute to this ongoing discourse. More specifically, its principal task becomes clarified by the central methodological question of how virtue is acquired, cultivated, and may become developed. From a Catholic standpoint, the critical aim concerns developing the proper hermeneutic to both shape and inform virtue responses to climate change. In this regard, the ethical perspective continues to emphasize three crucial implications that must be kept at the forefront of any effective, systematic response to the urgent struggle of climate justice, namely, radical inequality that disproportionately affects the poor and most vulnerable, basic commitments to protect creation and care for non-human creatures, and solidarity with future generations. To this end, proposing practical means and key conditions for the pursuit of ecological conversion, this comparative theological approach is developed to cultivate a more suitable response. Building solidarity and practicing hospitality, this virtue-rooted approach proposes lessons in developing sobriety, attunement, and resilience in accord with hope.

A core concern that I address is the lack of engagement with both concrete problems and shared challenges that transcend religious boundaries. In *The Future of Ethics*, Willis Jenkins contributes key focus toward “reform projects,” that is, actual cases of cultural change and religious creativity. In a pragmatic way, he suggests that these social movements offer vital lessons that demonstrate how to become better managers of humanity’s planetary powers. In a “prophetic” spirit, furthermore, he claims these lessons should enable and may inspire persons as moral agents to resist and overcome how conditions of “moral pluralism and cultural conflict” alienate ethical responses. From a comparative theological perspective, I critique his understanding of hospitality, how his strategy systematically ignores contributions of religious others and his relative lack of engagement with non-Christian sources. I argue that the discipline of comparative theology functions to make a particularly important contribution to this issue, pointing to the usefulness of virtue ethics that highlight the types of people we should become, the capabilities and distinct contributions of religious perspectives, and the methods of virtue cultivation that might serve climate ethics in understanding the complex goal of “reinhabitation.” I define this aspirational concept of reinhabitation as threefold, providing an altered sense of place, “spiritual landscape,” and practice of everyday life.

In response to climate change, therefore, this dissertation attempts to forward a possible method of ethical reasoning as much as a discrete role for the discipline of comparative theology. As virtue ethics is supplemented dialectically with the use of case-based reasoning, the dialogical method allows a back-and-forth style of reasoning that enables judgments to be challenged and revised and even allows the possibility to listen and learn from others. The current literature of climate ethics tends to fall short of how

theoretical work on virtue must be guided toward concretely affecting how flourishing becomes understood, implicating both the practice of everyday life and moral formation. While highlighting friendship as a possible basis for shaping ecological agency, I argue that the virtue ethics of Thomas Aquinas continues to provide important lessons in “broadening” justice to include those who are excluded from their “due” share, and encompasses the “community of the universe.” However, in Thomas’s understanding of ecological agency, Christian theology must confront, rehabilitate, and seek to reconcile limitations and inherited problems. In particular, I shall address habitual tendencies to either dominate or exclude other, non-human creatures in Christian visions of flourishing. In common, Islamic approaches seem to be developing the question of ecological agency with a more acute consciousness toward habits and virtues that integrate ecological concerns. In the virtue ethics of Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, I turn to an alternative model of virtue cultivation that emphasizes bodily practices in its development perspective, with a more corporeal and therapeutic way to practice temperance, enact justice in accord with law, and perhaps fostering hope.

In this dissertation, as a result of this dialogical engagement, I argue for the incorporation of both case-based reasoning and development of virtue ethics. Taken together, this method of reasoning can draw inquiry into cooperative habits of solidarity and may create conditions for practicing hospitality. In sum, what kind of justice is necessary? In the concluding chapter, based on the case of the Niger Delta, I begin to sketch the outlines for a model of restorative justice with the promising basis of Muslim-Christian dialogue, the key role of climate change witnesses, and building possible pathways toward building resilience in the name of the greater common good.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of
Ann O'Connell Collins (1931–2017) and Bernard Michael Collins (1929–2012)

Abstract

Dedication

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Two of my grandparents, Momo and Doc, Ann and Bern Collins, passed away during my graduate studies. Doc passed first, while I was at Harvard and on the verge of departing for Jordan, and several years later Momo passed, while I was teaching my first introductory course Religious Quest at Boston College. I want to acknowledge them in memoriam. They are the ones who first shaped my theological outlook, accompanied me and encouraged a growing commitment to my faith, and I am just beginning to fathom the wisdom that they imparted. I am dedicating the work that this dissertation required to these two teachers of virtue.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam. “For the greater glory of God.”

Michael VanZandt Collins
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Introducing Climate Ethics and Comparative Theology

In the service of climate ethics, from a comparative theological perspective, this dissertation argues for incorporating case-based reasoning and development of virtue ethics that, taken together, can draw us into habits of building solidarity and practicing hospitality.

If taken together, a method of moral reasoning emerges according to a twofold dialectical manner: first, case-based reasoning provides the development of virtue ethics with concrete particularities from which to inform prudential judgments and gradually deepen usefulness of particular virtues; second, between Christians and Muslims, cultivating virtues can generate focus toward those practices that allow participants in dialogues and debates to revise and renew understandings of flourishing in light of climate change. In accord, this dissertation strives to demonstrate and substantiate some decisive shifts that are possible if climate change is approached dialogically in these terms. From a particularly Catholic standpoint, the critical and comparative aims are meant to serve the purpose of understanding the call of “ecological conversion.” Considering climate change, justice requires drawing upon certain dispositions while becoming open to the need of rehabilitating other habits. In this regard, we should remain vigilant to the encouragement and admonishment that Pope Francis offered in *Laudato si’*. “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue,” Pope Francis determines, “it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”¹

Willis Jenkins’s 2013 book *The Future of Ethics* has set a new standard for the engagement between Christian theological ethics and the concrete challenges of climate

¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato si’* [Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home] (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), sec. 217; hereafter *Ls’*, with in-text citation.

change, prioritizing the problems of radical inequality.² “How the world confronts poverty affects biodiversity loss,” Jenkins states matter-of-factly, “and how it responds to climate change affects the protection of human rights.”³ In 2014, the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released their Fifth General Assessment Report, concluding that as a result of socioeconomic inequities the “severity” of impacts heightens “exposure” and “vulnerability.”⁴ Increasingly, over the past several years, it is understood that due to anthropogenic climate change these inequalities are widening, as the suffering that the poor and most vulnerable experience on a daily basis is further exacerbated.⁵ In this way, amongst others, Jenkins rightfully points out that theological perspectives must seriously reckon with this radical inequality. For him, moreover, the starting point should also be understood as one of “moral incompetence,” because “moral practices and concepts available to a community do not encompass the scale or complexity of a situation to which an agent or [a] community need to respond.”⁶ In his view, this judgment not only describes individual capabilities, but also institutions of justice, ethical concepts, and moral traditions. As such, Jenkins inquires: “What does justice mean for climate change, a problem in which many nations, traditions, and generations will find themselves collectively responsible for how a planetary system will function over centuries?”⁷

² Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013).

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report; Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Leo Meter, et al. (Geneva: IPCC, 2014), 55, Topic 1.5.

⁵ Noah S. Diffenbaugh and Marshall Burke, “Global Warming Has Increased Global Economic Inequality,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 116 (2019): 9808–13.

⁶ Willis Jenkins, “Atmospheric Power, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence: Challenges to Doing Social Ethics from Below,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 1 (2014): 65–82, cited at 68.

⁷ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 1.

How can one try to begin understanding what justice means given the planetary scale, moral impacts, and irrevocable effects of climate change? Since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the term “climate ethics” has emerged and been used in various ways.⁸ One typical way concerns arbitration and mediation of competing claims with regard to the issue of climate change, which may require “differentiated responsibilities.” In 1992, the philosopher Dale Jamieson, a leading figure, claimed that climate change “concerns our values,” and is “about how we ought to live, and how humans should relate to each other and to the rest of nature.”⁹ Similarly, as I use the term, climate ethics involves complex considerations and patterns of inquiry into a broad range of issues about what it means to be human in a world increasingly altered by anthropogenic climate change.

To make sense of this reality, the climate scientist Paul Crutzen and his collaborators coined the term Anthropocene, distinguishing the current planetary state from the climatic stability of the Holocene. In sum, they propose that “[h]uman activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*.”¹⁰ Regarding this unknown territory, Jenkins’s work belongs not only to Christian ethics, but also contributes more broadly to this field of climate ethics. Thus, in his own distinct way, Jenkins’s method and strategic approach

⁸ The origin of the term climate ethics is not certain, having transpired in various centers, such as the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Rock Ethics Institute. For a critical overview, see Stephen Gardiner, “Ethics and Climate Change: An Introduction,” *WIREs Climate Change* 1, no. 1 (2010): 54–66; it is now in need of an update. In my research, the first dedicated effort to the topic of climate change is the special issue, “Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?,” *Dædalus* 130, no. 4 (2001). For a Catholic precursor, see Sean McDonagh, SCC, *Climate Change: The Challenge to Us All* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2007).

⁹ Dale Jamieson, “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming,” *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 17, no. 2 (1992): 139–53, cited at 142; also published in *Global Bioethics* 5, no. 1 (1992): 31–42, Henry Shue, “The Unavoidability of Justice,” in *The International Politics of the Environment: Actors, Interests, and Institutions*, eds. Andrew Hurrell and Benedict Kingsbury, 373–97 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” in *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* 36, no. 8 (2008): 614–21; see also Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Will Steffen, and Paul Crutzen, “The New World of the Anthropocene,” *Environmental Science and Technology* 44, no. 7 (2010): 2228–31.

claims that primarily “managing earth systems as influential participants means learning to manage ourselves.”¹¹ For him, this point requires a way of reflecting and questioning that accounts not only for ecological disruptions and the gross injustice of socioeconomic inequalities, but also anticipates another crucial implication: any effective and systemic response to climate change must foster a sense of intergenerational solidarity.” From his Christian viewpoint, he judges that in the face of climate change “our most important obligation to future generations may be passing on practices of confession and love through which the future might forgive us.”¹²

In this dissertation, I argue that the discipline of theology should adopt the case-based reasoning that typifies the work of Willis Jenkins and his ethical strategy that he refers to as “prophetic pragmatism.” As a key for better understanding the ethical challenge of climate justice, he bases this strategy on “reform projects,” that is, actual examples of cultural change. The strategy is a “pragmatism” because it assumes that “humans must manage earth for their own learning and ongoing moral transformation”; it is “prophetic” since it aims to illustrate “how moral communities open ways of practical hope from the midst of overwhelming problems.”¹³ In a confessional sense, he suggests that, carried by practices, religious responses acknowledge these intergenerational, long-term responsibilities. Similarly, in his encyclical, Pope Francis understands that the challenge exceeds the obligation to care for the vulnerable and God’s creation, asserting: “The notion of the common good also extends to future generations” (*Ls*’, sec. 159). On August 6th,

¹¹ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 3.

¹² Ibid., 57, see esp. chapter 7, “Intergenerational Risk and the Future of Love,” 282–322, cf. the tortured remarks in Byron Williston, “Conclusion: Will They Forgive Us?,” in *The Anthropocene Project: Virtue in an Age of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158–69.

¹³ Ibid., 11, 12.

2021, United Nation’s IPCC has further clarified that with each passing year of waiting and stalled developments, the problems of climate change will only worsen and intensify.¹⁴ Simply, responses to climate change will determine whether and to what extent an inhabitable planet is passed onto future generations. Promoting the greater common good, accordingly, this horizon requires developmental perspectives that help us become more accountable toward what is owed toward the poor and most vulnerable, non-human creatures, and future generations. To be clear, questions such as these are complex and ought not be interpreted as fixed once and for all. Nevertheless, I agree with Jenkins’s point that reform projects, at the forefront of the struggle, offer vital lessons regarding humanity’s ecological agency and help us engage such questions as an ongoing challenge.

In the service of climate ethics, virtue ethics promises a way to integrate these concerns in cultivating virtues and reasoning about justice in the name of the greater common good. Over the past decade, climate ethics has reflected a broader shift toward virtue ethics. Whereas Jenkins is primarily concerned with the question whether humanity will learn to be responsible and manage itself, Pope Francis rearticulates a vision of justice in virtue terms, proposing sobriety and humility as two disciplines that help us to begin responding to the call of justice. In 2013, drawing from Plato’s *Republic*, Princeton political philosopher Melissa Lane argued virtue lessons are available for both channeling necessity and decisively challenging the hegemonic bias toward social “inertia.”¹⁵ In order to address moral sensibilities and the development of environmental virtue ethics,

¹⁴ IPCC, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis; Summary for Policymakers*, eds. Valérie Masson-Delmotte, Panmao Zhai, et al. (Geneva: IPCC, 2021), available online at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/> (accessed 11 August 2021).

¹⁵ Melissa Lane, *Eco-Republic: What Ancients Can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), and idem, “Political Theory on Climate,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19 (2016): 107–23, esp. 114.

according to Charles Taliaferro, “religious conceptions of flourishing are important to consider, as they are, socially and philosophically, an important challenge to consumptive, economically defined values in popular culture, marketplace, and politics.”¹⁶ Regarding moral limits of the market, like others, Nancy Menning also advocated that religious language and power of religious narratives are particularly useful and fitting for a just transition because “religion and climate ethics are explorations of ultimate questions.”¹⁷

To appreciate the usefulness of virtue ethics, we must first attempt to understand how the challenge of climate change threatens to impair or hinder virtue responses. In *Living in Denial*, Kari Marie Norgaard indicates various reasons that villagers of a small Norwegian hamlet, all concerned and well informed, are disposed toward habitual silence whenever the subject of climate change arises. Reflecting upon this case, she concludes climate change “challenges us both as individuals to act as moral agents and to retain our sense of positive self-identity, self-efficacy, and hopefulness in the face of ever greater obstacles.”¹⁸ Willis Jenkins describes this case as a collective instance of “moral incompetence” that permits “implicit denial.”¹⁹ He later writes that this case reveals the core problem is the “more subtle organization of denial that works to protect cultures from change,” which effectively excuses responsibility due to complexity and scale.²⁰

¹⁶ Charles Taliaferro, “Vices and Virtues in Religious Environmental Ethics,” in *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, eds. Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro, 159–72 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), esp. 159–61, cited at 161.

¹⁷ Nancy Menning, “Narrating Climate Change as a Rite of Passage,” *Climatic Change* 147, no. 1 (2018): 350 (343–53), cf. Michael S. Hogue, “Global Warming and Stick-Fighting,” *Cross Currents* 57 (2007): 116–24. This narrative dynamic of virtue ethics is addressed in later chapters.

¹⁸ Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), cited at 222.

¹⁹ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 48.

²⁰ Willis Jenkins, “Doing Theological Ethics with Incompetent Christians: Social Problems and Religious Creativity,” in *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy*, eds. Charles Marsh, Peter Slade, and Sarah Azaransky (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 58, Norgaard, *Denial*, 207.

Elsewhere, reflecting the field's virtue turn, Jenkins judges that "good character can forestall and counteract the way wickedness foments vice."²¹ I'm not so sure, however. Does not turning to virtue ethics achieve more than contextualizing virtuous behavior and criticizing those who are stuck in vicious cycles? From a virtue standpoint, indeed, these habitual responses are not immaterial. First, the pursuit of virtues can provide specific ends and offer practical means for engaging these silencing habits as the initial stage of the ethical challenge. Second, and more importantly, the cultivation of virtue responses provides motivating reasons to counteract habitual problems and tendencies. As a result, virtue-rooted approaches may draw inquiry toward practices that enable us to learn what these virtues mean more deeply. This dissertation thus extends an invitation to examine our vulnerabilities in the face of climate change and reinhabit how we practice everyday life.

Thus, it must be asked, "What is virtue ethics for?" For climate ethics, the teleological viewpoint of virtue ethics may offer a sense of purpose in a different, simpler key. Whereas ultimately Jenkins seeks to lead humanity toward learning ways to manage planetary powers more ethically, while we wrestle with "moral incompetence," the transformative purpose of virtue ethics may address the broader goal of *reinhabitation*. First, reinhabitation challenges virtue ethics to re-examine how human flourishing depends on and is embedded particularly in ecological relations. In the 1970s, Gary Snyder began to popularize this bioregionalist concept, having fashioned himself as a "reinhabitory poet" who endeavored to live in forgotten and degraded habitats.²² To "reinhabit," as one

²¹ Willis Jenkins, "The Turn to Virtue in Climate Ethics: Wickedness and Goodness in the Anthropocene," *Environmental Ethics* 38, no. 1 (2017): 80, cf. Stephen Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 437, and Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle against Climate Change Failed—And What It Means for Our Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). In chapter 1, it is explained that the term "wickedness" here describes the inherent complexity, not moral wrongness.

²² See Peter Berg, *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (San Francisco: Planet Drum Foundation, 1978).

dictionary defines the term, can mean either “to dwell again” or “inhabit (a place, etc.) again.” The first use is intransitive—and considered obsolete—whereas the latter is transitive.²³ For Snyder himself, being re-inhabitory means “to become people who are learning to live and think ‘as if’ they were totally engaged with their place for a long future.”²⁴ In following this example that he set, Buddhist ethicist Stephanie Kaza explains “Snyder models the level of commitment necessary to reinhabit a place and build community that might eventually span several generations.”²⁵ From Charles Stain’s perspective, this transformative process bears “resemblance to Buddhist practices, particularly *samādhī* re-interpreted in order to correspond with a distinct place, to the specific variation of climate or soil.”²⁶ Which practices thus help reinhabit sense of place?

Second, within instantiations, reinhabitation considers the cohesive power of communal narratives to which communities are bound, with their changing conceptions of virtue, and conscience. In *Green Sisters*, Sarah McFarland Taylor describes movements of Catholic women religious who come to recognize that their calling involves the integration of ecological concerns. She discovered that, deeply resonant beyond a Buddhist context, some communities had appropriated the term reinhabitation, absorbing and circulating it. Through her correspondence with Gail Worcelo, the Mother-Superior of Vermont’s Green Mountain Monastery, McFarland Taylor reports that this Benedictine community had decided to adopt “reinhabitation” within their monastic communications, attesting, “we are

²³ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “reinhabit.”

²⁴ Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds; New and Selected Prose* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint).

²⁵ Stephanie Kaza, “To Save All Beings: Buddhist Environmental Activism,” in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Religion, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 2004), 330–50, cited at 342.

²⁶ Charles Stain, “Reinventing Buddhist Practices to Meet the Challenge of Climate Change,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 17, no. 1 (2016): 138–56, cited at 148.

reinhabiting the spiritual landscape of the Catholic monastic tradition.”²⁷ As also is the case within more active communities, McFarland Taylor claims that reinhabitation involves a twofold dynamic: “a process of finding new ways to reinhabit their community, sisters are also creating more sustainable ways to ‘reinhabit’ the spiritual landscapes of Catholic tradition and vowed religious life.” In this way, regularly deepening and cultivating what they call “earth ministries,” green sisters intend to effectively model “for others how humans can live in true communion with creation.”²⁸ Which habits allow us to examine and inquire how we practice everyday life more deeply?

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot argued that ancient modes of philosophy involved “spiritual exercises,” a set of disciplined practices that were used to self-consciously shape character.²⁹ For climate ethics, in this vein, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer argues that virtue ethics “melds form and content—to have each support the other.” However, concerned by proponents who misunderstand the ethical point of virtue ethics, he queries: “Are we concerned with the *concept* of virtue, or with virtue itself?”³⁰ If the former, only thinking about character, “meta-ethical” interests miss the mark. If the latter, self-examination may assume its practical aims, as virtue ethics “seeks the good.” As such, Bendik-Keymer sets off to present a sample spiritual exercise, examining the moral

²⁷ Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), xviii–xix, esp. xviii, and 123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 12.

²⁹ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995).

³⁰ Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, “Species Extinction and the Vice of Thoughtlessness: The Importance of Spiritual Exercises for Learning Virtue,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 1-2 (2010): 61–83, cited at 62, 71, 78 (emphasis mine). For the philosophical foundation, he cites Hadot’s work but also adds that more specifically: “Interestingly, some Jesuit schools still have this goal. Is it a coincidence that Ignatius of Loyola popularized the expression ‘spiritual exercise’ and made spiritual exercises central to Jesuit practice?” (67 n18). In this regard, see James Profit, “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and Ecology,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 59 (2003): 853–9.

wrongness of the sixth mass extinction. Noticeably, a personal tendency often leads Bendik-Keymer to habitually disengage, which induces what he calls the vice of “thoughtlessness.” The normative aim of his spiritual exercise, however, is to develop a more enduring habit of thoughtfulness not only to climate change more broadly, but regarding this issue of mass extinction broadly. To learn this habit, in conscience, he writes: “When I think about these things, I become even more agitated and feel like giving up.” Disturbed, he nevertheless seeks to understand what it means to revere life in other species, and to resist in his writing exercise the habitual thoughtlessness that “overlooks the quality of life.” In the end, he claims: “We have to be in the habit of *listening* to conscience.”

The usefulness of spiritual exercises seeks, in effect, to bring about fundamental changes in perspective; and thus, by changed dispositions and views, the practitioner becomes transformed, too. For Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505_{AH}/1111_{CE}), spiritual exercises enabled reflective persons to acquire inspired wisdom, while learning how to enact and embody certain virtuous attributes.³¹ In “Disciplining the Soul,” a classic treatise, Ghazālī informs students that virtue is cultivated by “means of spiritual struggle and exercise.” He advises that if one, who is neither innately disposed nor so blessed by God, wishes to become generous the practitioner is obliged to “do generous things; that is, to give of what [one] owns, and must continue in this wise, affecting this thing and struggling with one’s soul until one’s nature conforms to it and it becomes easy, at which point, [one] will become a generous person.”³² Indeed, as alms-giving cultivates generosity, social

³¹ For historical background, see Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and His Revival of the Religious Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. 32–45; see also 63–122.

³² Tim J. Winter, trans., *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1995), 32. For background, see Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue* (Albany, State University of New

practices transform the practitioner.³³ According to Ghazālī, however, spiritual rewards and personal benefits are only possible by way of serving the good of another. For Ghazālī, generous practices allow a practitioner to continuously deepen the understanding of the goods of almsgiving, but this “training” is not solely meant for individual benefit. For him, “spiritual exercises” provide a broad canvas upon which to cultivate virtuous habits. If diligently practiced, he suggests that ultimately admirable characteristics may reflect those attributable qualities that can only be derived from the merciful and compassionate generosity of divine love. Regarding climate change, in kind, spiritual exercises offer a meaningful way not only to counteract those habits that cause us to disengage, but primarily to understand how virtues are practiced and even cultivated.

Subsequently, therefore, the purpose of reinhabitation allows virtue ethics to present due emphasis on change, conversion, and a practical focus toward virtuous habituation. Similarly, Thomas Aquinas (d.1274) understood virtue as an empowering “habit” (*habitus*). In Thomas’s *Summa theologiae*, at the outset of the second half of the second volume (the *Secunda Secundae*), he claims that it is reasonable to reduce “the whole of moral matters to the consideration of the virtues.”³⁴ Like Ghazālī, Thomas provides an understanding of how virtue is cultivated. For Thomas, a life of virtue is reducible to whether we are just, we exercise practical wisdom, and our actions reflect temperance and fortitude. Moreover, the journey of acquiring virtue demands more than study; due to exercises (*exercitium*), habits are changeable, and virtuous habits may even be developed.

York, 1975), Georges Hourani, “Ghazālī on the Ethics of Action,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96 (1976): 69–88, Taneli Kukkonen, “Al-Ghazālī on the Emotions,” in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, ed. Georges Tamer and Frank Griffel, 137–64 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

³³ Elizabeth M. Bucar, “Islam and the Cultivation of Character,” in *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 200–1.

³⁴ *ST IIa IIae*, Preface.

Hence, study of Thomas's *Summa* and the virtue ethics of Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, specifically the *Mizān al-'amal* and in his *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, provide useful guides. The social practices, exemplary narratives, methods of cultivation, and ways of belonging with ecological relations are not identical. Nonetheless, these virtue accounts can help us appreciate how the virtues are related and can become cultivated. In addition, the models—as opposed to contemporary virtue approaches that tend to privatize these lessons—offer a communal appeal to ethical questions of the good life. As a result, this dialogical approach may more adequately confront a central methodological question about how virtue is acquired, cultivated, developed.³⁵ I shall argue that a constructive pathway is provided toward building solidarity, practicing hospitality, and even rectifying “terrestrial” habits.

In chapter 1, this dissertation begins with the basic task of building solidarity, and so juxtaposes lived experience as found in the case of Bygdaby with the *chauras*, a vulnerable community who inhabit the silt islands of Bangladesh's Jamuna River.³⁶ Considered judgments are offered to substantiate specifically why we should be doing virtue ethics. By this introduction, accordingly, it is hoped we can begin to develop our own virtue responses. Jenkins's own use of case-based reasoning contributes critical attention toward concrete problems and urgent questions of moral agency, while providing grounds to develop solidarity as a foundational virtue. However, particularly in *The Future of Ethics*, Jenkins neither engages non-Christian responses nor does he go beyond acknowledging their presence. “If we are trying to make sense of our situation amidst

³⁵ Nancy Snow, “Introduction,” in Snow, *Cultivating Virtue*, 1; William Werpehowski and Kathryn Getek Soltis, *Virtue and the Moral Life: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

³⁶ For climate ethics, as chapter 1 will discuss, Norgaard's ethnographic work has served as a very popular point of reference. In this dissertation, I use this work as a case study that basically informs the starting point.

diversity and likewise keep our faith,” Frank Clooney has claimed, “some version of comparative theological reflection is required.”³⁷

In chapter 2, the comparative theological exercise highlights the similar but distinct ways a virtue hermeneutic is cultivated by Pope Francis and the Muslim scholars who authored the 2015 “Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change.” If approached dialogically, these two theological statements help develop the groundwork to both identify root anthropogenic causes and motivate virtue responses. This chapter aims to practice hospitality toward religious others, especially Muslim contributions, also with special concern for the poor and the most vulnerable. Constructively, practicing hospitality here is understood as both a necessary and a beneficial condition. Examining climate vulnerabilities, virtue ethics helps critique another facet of the Bygdaby case, the prevailing sense of political entrapment. By and through dialogue, this chapter seeks to probe how these approaches re-engage virtue foundations in light of climate change and how the challenge of climate justice is recast toward root causes and shared accountability. By practicing hospitality, this comparative perspective proposes a dialogical approach toward climate justice in terms of cultivating virtue and reasoning about the common good.

In chapter 3, I argue that due to the need for positive self-identity in the face of climate change, a virtue framework can “rehabilitate” the virtue of temperance to constructively address human greed and the challenge of holistic thinking. Just as comparative theology is distinguished by the “material it brings to theological reflection,” as Catherine Cornille contends, we shall incorporate the insights of others into virtue

³⁷ Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 4.

inquiry and self-examination.³⁸ In this chapter, between the Thomistic and Ghazalian accounts, the foundational understandings of virtue ethics are introduced. For climate ethics, furthermore, this virtue basis provides a method of moral reasoning that is appropriate to listening to and learning from the lessons of the *eco-pesantren* movement, a Muslim reform project in Indonesia. Whereas a Thomistic sense of temperance is relatively circumscribed about material pleasures such as sexual desires, cravings for food and alcohol, by contrast, Ghazālī emphasizes a developmental perspective. For him, temperance is the primary training ground for virtue cultivation. Reflecting upon the Indonesian case, this chapter proposes a more holistic understanding of temperance that should prompt us to be accountable toward consumerist habits and embrace an integral sense of sobriety.

In chapter 4, climate change is presented as the prime example of a “collective action problem.” It proposes a key question: How should virtue ethics be brought to bear on the relation between human and ecological flourishing? Addressing widespread needs for positive self-efficacy, this exercise sets out to develop the question of ecological agency in more relational and “terrestrial” terms. Contesting Christian conceptions of “stewardship,” Islamic theologian Maria Massi Dakake’s reexamines by way of dialogue the Quranic theme of *khalīfah* to understand humanity’s vocation and ecological role. Challenging theological notions that it is humanity’s role to “manage” and govern God’s creation, she develops the question of ecological agency in terms of accountability that concerns how everyday life is practiced, on a more personal scale, and on an ecological scale concerning humanity’s relation to the rest of God’s creation. From a Christian

³⁸ Catherine Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 151, see also 153.

perspective, based on these lessons, I propose in virtue terms that justice in accord with law requires both practicing “respect for nature” and developing prudence with greater “attunement” to humanity’s roles in ecological communities.

Retrieving friendship as a potential foundation for developing ecological virtues, this comparative theological exercise sets out to initially highlight special obligations to the land and ultimately to rectify “terrestrial habits.” In dialogue, Michael Barnes has insisted that the primary task is “negotiation of the middle,” that is, identifying those “virtues which will inform the practice of inter-faith relations” so that we can learn both to receive and to respond.³⁹ By dialogue, virtue-rooted approaches can learn how to practice respect for nature, and attune understandings of humanity’s ecological vocation within visions of flourishing. Given centrality of bodily practices that Ghazālī’s virtue account emphasizes, we may resolve the relational question of flourishing with a more “terrestrial” and possibly repentant sense of ecological agency. In a more dialogical manner, thus, virtue ethics may develop attunement that accords with the Thomistic notion of the “community of the universe” as revived in the green sister movement.

In chapter 5, reconfiguring climate ethics by way of dialogue, I argue that the collective task requires understanding *how* to build resilience and requires fostering a sense of hopefulness that is less subject to the vicissitudes of fear, despair, as well as “wishful thinking” and naïve optimism. The case of the Niger Delta guides this concern. After evaluating four models of hope, a brief experiment in comparative theology is offered. According to the Thomistic and Ghazalian approaches as found in the *Summa theologiae* and a penultimate chapter in the *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, respectively, this exercise seeks to

³⁹ Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27.

understand how the virtue of hope is fostered. By this light, vital lessons may be drawn for the sake of virtue learning, particularly building resilience in accord with hope.

Accordingly, this dissertation proposes that the debate about climate change should be reconfigured. For Catholic moral theology, the key tension of virtue learning lies between two related questions: “Who am I?” and “Who should I become?” Within this familiar tension, prudential judgment would require persons as moral agents to discern: “How do I get there?”⁴⁰ For climate ethics, in *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*, Bendik-Keymer and his colleague Allen Thompson echo insights from these key questions for organizing how we should think about climate justice, claiming: “Adjusting (1) who we are and (2) how we enable ourselves to (3) best meet new and projected ecological conditions, highlighting climate change.”⁴¹ In a more engaged and intentional manner, how might virtue ethics affect the way we approach the concrete challenges of climate change? Furthermore, how may virtue ethics acknowledge not only the fact of religious diversity, but enable fuller engagement? In *The Future of Ethics*, Willis Jenkins addresses the context of “moral pluralism and cultural conflict” as the deepest part of the ethical challenge, proposing that responses must be generated in the tension between “one world” and “many moral worlds.” A notable limitation of that work, however, is the fact that Jenkins never engages religious difference. Promoting the common good, by contrast, I propose that dialogical engagement with religious difference as both a necessity and potentially beneficial. While questions of the good life do not promise to fix climate change, from a

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Paul J. Waddell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 11, 19–21, James F. Keenan, “Virtue Ethics,” in *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, ed. Bernard Hoose, 84–94 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), Lúcas Chan, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), 82–3, Nicholas Austin, “Normative Theory in Theological Ethics,” *Religions* 8, no. 10 (2017)..

⁴¹ Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction: Adapting Humanity,” in *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*, eds. Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 7.

comparative theological perspective, the pursuit of virtues may conclusively help us to understand humanity as “inhabitants” of the world to which we belong, and not just “system-builders.”⁴² In the meantime, virtues will offer key focus and the motivating reasons toward building solidarity and creating conditions for more hospitable encounters between different individuals and communities from different moral traditions.

⁴² William E. Paden, “Elements of a New Comparativism,” in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, eds. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, 182–92 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Climate Change, Ethics, and Religion: Seeking Guides for the Perplexed

This chapter attempts to situate ethical reflection to the climate crisis by way of a virtue introduction to various challenges that the issues impose upon ethical reflection. By way of two cases, it seeks to reorient the principal task of ethics with respect to climate change. Whereas a basic assumption, typically, is either general ignorance or moral corruption, this chapter posits an affective engagement to the issue that is already present but muted. In response, it offers four virtue bases to initiate appraising the challenge of the climate crisis with reference to Pope Francis, the climate ethicists Stephen Gardiner and Dale Jamieson, and finally the theological ethicist Willis Jenkins. It indicates how Jenkins's basic method avails itself to a virtue perspective and, accordingly, a case-based approach that focuses on moral agency can foster the virtue of solidarity. The chapter, in closing, marks a limit to Jenkins's model of climate ethics for its lack of actual engagement with religious difference. As such, it suggests a constructive role for a disciplined use of comparative theology.

Immediate Considerations

At the 1995 Berlin conference on climate change, Atiq Rahman of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Study asserted a sobering thought, warning, "if climate change makes our country uninhabitable, we will march with our wet feet into your living rooms."¹ Over two decades later, this proclamation continues to haunt discussion of climate change for numerous reasons. For one, there is its timing; shortly after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change was inaugurated. As a landmark event, at an international level, those efforts promised to formalize political commitments to limit greenhouse gases according to the treaty's Article 4. Doing so, broadly, it offered two modes for nations to address critical tasks associated

¹ Tom Athanasiou and Paul Baer, *Dead Heat: Global Justice and Global Warming* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 23, cf. Gianfranco Pellegrino "Climate Refugees: A Case for Protection," in *Canned Heat: Ethics and Politics of Global Climate Change*, eds. Marcello di Paola and Pellegrino, 193–209 (London: Routledge, 2014).

with climate change, namely either “mitigation” or “adaptation.” As catalyst for the protection of the ozone-layer, furthermore, that event initiated both a climate triumph and marks the origin for the politics of climate change. Nevertheless, as Rahman warns, both rapid economic and technological expansion of human power persists in outpacing policy.² Second, there is its foresight; as of 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that at least ten percent of Rahman’s nation will become submerged because of anthropogenic causes, caught between river erosion and sea-level rise. Due to climate-related events, as current reality, millions of dislocated Bangladeshis already take refuge in eastern parts of India.

Additionally, because of anthropogenic causes, the injustice is becoming more intensely and urgent felt. In Glasgow, at the COP26 meetings, the representatives of many so-called developing nations echoed Rahman’s point, decrying the injustice that they are the ones who suffer the most, although they have contributed the least. There is, however, no reason to cite only far-flung instances of ecological stresses upon societies and human persons. There is domestic testimony to the impact of climate change, as is the case for the inhabitants of Louisiana’s Île de Jean Charles. As the Gulf of Mexico reclaims this island, the locals, whose Cajun descendants regarded that place as a refuge after fleeing hostile occupation, now must uproot and relocate elsewhere.³ They are among the first communities in the United States will be dislocated due to climate change, but not the earliest. On the frontiers of Alaska, Inuit communities such as the Shishmaref have had to

² One could consider a climate-related drought in the Levant as precondition for the social unrest that precipitated the Syrian conflict.

³ Carolyn Van Houten, “The First Official Climate Refugees in the U.S. Race Against Time,” *National Geographic* (25 May 2016), available online at: <https://on.natgeo.com/3JiJDJI>

confront existential questions due to sea-level rise. In August 2016, they voted to relocate the village away from their ancestral home.⁴

As climate ethics has developed, it has become a critical commonplace to assert that climate change should not be regarded as either a purely economic or a technological challenge. In 1992, after the landmark Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, pioneering climate ethicist Dale Jamieson contested this prevalent assumption, asserting the imperative to “confront climate change as a fundamental challenge to our values and not treat it as it were simply another technical problem.”⁵ In 2015, he pressed the point further, writing, “a reliable cost-benefit analysis” cannot register the loss due to “vast damages to much we care about: human lives, property, species, natural ecosystems, and so forth.”⁶ Given this conviction, it may seem strange that in 2004, his collaborator Stephen Gardiner noted the surprising neglect of the problem within their guild, remarking: “Very few moral philosophers have written on climate change.”⁷ Later, in 2010, emboldened, he argued for reframing climate change altogether. “The dominant discourses about the nature of the climate threat are scientific and economic,” he claimed, “But the deepest challenge is ethical.”⁸ In this vein, on the eve of COP21 in December 2015, the legal theorist Jedediah Purdy assessed the grave practice of discounting future generations in efforts to buffer climate impact. “Other questions that masquerade as technical are really ethical and

⁴ See Elizabeth Marino, *Fierce Climate, Sacred Grounds: An Ethnography of Climate Change in Shishmaref Alaska* (Anchorage: University of Alaska Press, 2015).

⁵ Dale Jamieson, “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming,” in *Global Ethics* 5, no. 1 (1992): 31–42; “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming,” *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 17, no. 2 (1992): 139–55; see also Henry Shue, “The Unavoidability of Justice,” *International Politics of the Environment* 373 (1992): 373–97.

⁶ Dale Jamieson, “Responsibility and Climate Change,” in *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric* 8, no. 2 (2015): 24 (23–42).

⁷ Stephen Gardiner, “Ethics and Global Climate Change,” *Ethics* 114, no. 3 (2004): 555 (555–600).

⁸ Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xi. For reasons why economic paradigm fail, see Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 5.

political. How much should future interests—a life in 2100, for example—count in calculations today?” He adds, “Again, there is no merely technical answer.”⁹

Yet, as climate change continues to unfold, the ethical concerns clearly extend beyond such specialized deliberation about the expansion of human powers and its perils, more broadly, it also ought to address how climate change affects the practice of everyday life in more pedestrian ways. Accordingly, starting from the assumption that climate change needs to be approached as neither a distant nor primarily conceptual problem, this dissertation must underscore the immediate and practical problems that affect the challenge. It is precisely so, I posit, because climate change already affects us in subtle ways with respect to our ethical comportment, bearings, and perhaps even outlook.

1.1 *Climate Change and Ethical Disruption: Two Anthropological Stories*

Two stories provide illustrative examples about how climate change both subtly and dramatically affects the practice of everyday life. The first story comes from a small and prosperous village in a transatlantic society, Norway, and is based on the ethnographic fieldwork of Kari Marie Norgaard. Amidst an abnormal winter, the regular snowfall in the mountains around the village of Bygdaby is all but absent. The inhabitants of this community, the *Bygdabyingar*, well informed about climate science seem almost predisposed to caring about ecological matters. Public support for environmental initiatives is strong. Respect for nature is core to what it means to be Norwegians, many say. The *Bygdabyingar* exemplify this collectively through their winter activities such as skiing and especially *Sondagstur*, a hike customarily taken on Sundays. This winter, however, due to

⁹ Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 264. For a similar tact in moral philosophy, see Donald A. Brown, *Climate Change Ethics: Navigating the Perfect Moral Storm* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

the lack of snow these pastimes are impossible. Despite acceptance of climate change, Norgaard notices that the topic of climate change rarely appears either in local newspapers or local politics; it hardly arises in ordinary conversations and is rare even in environment-focused meetings. Meanwhile, domestic oil production expands. Some locals even suggest that exporting their “cleaner” oil makes “good climate change policy internationally.” As one local explains, confessing, “We go on vacation and we go shopping, and my partner drives to work every day. And I drive often up here [to my office] myself. ... We feel that we must do it to make things work in a good way, on a practical level, but we have a guilty conscience, a bit of a guilty conscience.”¹⁰

The second story comes from a vastly different cultural context and topography, the banks of a delta river in Bangladesh, courtesy of the ethnographic fieldwork of Naveeda Khan. A farming community on a small silt island (*char*) welcomes an American visitor into their community. She learns that the silt on which the village is situated is eroding more swiftly than in years past due to the rising waters of the voluminous Jamuna River. She is interested in how this impoverished community intuits climate change. After months in this community, she learns the opposite: despite the advocacy campaigns from Dhakar, most consider *jol bayu poriborton* (Bangla, “climate change”) as a Western hoax or, worse yet, poisonous. Still, an elderly woman of the village wonders aloud to the visitor, “If the earth (*mati*) breaks so much, how do we stay *manush* (human)?” Attending the mosque since her youth, the visitor also recognizes in the conversation with the elderly woman how the *chauras* (the inhabitants of a *char*) identify themselves. Associated with the prophet Adam, that is, as emerging from the earth, the elderly woman seems to acknowledge that

¹⁰ For this ethnographic fieldwork, see Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

though the river destroys, she also recognizes that it creates. The reconstituted silt islands offer the basic livelihood of the *chauras*. The visitor is also struck by the generosity the community begins to extend toward packs of dogs that once roamed the fringes of their village. Some villagers murmured about being reincarnated as a dog in the next life. In the company of his dog Kalu, a local musician sings a traditional tale of the eternal quest for union with a beloved: “It is as close as any of my children to me. I can’t refuse his affection.” Recalling the imam’s recent sermons about Judgment Day, the visitor asks, Will Kalu be there on Judgment Day? No, Shontesh responds, “There is only Judgment Day for humans because we have been given a conscience (*bebaik*).”¹¹

1.1.1. Comparative Reflection: Casting the Bygdaby Case in a New Light

From two different cultural contexts, in common, these two vignettes depict the destabilizing impact of climate change within the practice of everyday life. The first is primarily about the ethical silence that settles around climate change. As a paradigmatic case in the growing literature of climate ethics—interpreted with starkly divergent ethical assessments—this ethnographic account has served many purposes. Typically, this falls into two camps: in the first camp, the *Bydabyingar* are read to exemplify their ethical defectiveness and the depth of their moral corruption, a basic unwillingness to adapt ethically.¹² Meanwhile, in the other camp, suspecting an absence of formal ethics, climate ethicists prefer to read this story of climate change as a poignant case of chronic non-response; in effect, within this Norwegian community, these villagers lack any meaningful

¹¹ See Naveeda Khan, “Dogs and Humans and What Earth Can Be: Filaments of Muslim Ecological Thought,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 3 (2014): 245–64. The place of dogs in the Islamic traditions and Muslim societies is complex, see Sarra Tlili, “Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article,” *Religion* 9, no. 9 (2018): 1–18.

¹² See, e.g., Byron Williston’s *The Anthropocene Project: Virtue in an Age of Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 121–3. Williston is not alone.

practices in the face of climate change. In other words, from an ethical perspective, whereas the former camp supposes the critical task is to confront ethical failure, the latter take the initiative to assume the enterprise of climate ethics must emerge, as it were, *ex nihilo*.

Whatever you make of the Bygdaby case, the *chauras* relate destabilizing conditions of a fundamentally different order. Unknown in climate ethics, this story from Bangladesh concerns how a communal matrix thinks, feels, and imagines alternatively amidst destabilizing, climate-related events. In juxtaposition, the case of the *chauras* and their riparian culture can usefully recast the *Bygdabyingar* into a different light for climate ethics. A little perspective, therefore, may help to highlight specific issues that confound persons as agents, and motivating reasons to address concrete problems. For climate ethics, at the same time, this case should also usher poverty, radical inequality, and climate vulnerabilities to the forefront of an agenda.

If climate ethics is concerned not only with forwarding specific values but more broadly with human agency, it must then distinguish its form of address, context and what is focally under consideration.¹³ In the last decade, climate ethics has diversified in approach, focus, and purpose. Which human actors must be prioritized? Typically, because we tend to equate climate ethics with geopolitical negotiations, we are liable to habitually disregard the fact that climate change is already disrupting and, in some cases, reshaping the practice of everyday life. In this respect, Dale Jamieson, critiques how much of climate ethics formally remains “state-centric” in focus, warning that such predispositions risk

¹³ cf. Dale Jamieson, “Responsibility,” 38. Jamieson prefers a preliminary distinction that corresponds “climate ethics” with the classic questions of how to live well (under climate change conditions), which concerns individual agents, and then “climate justice,” which refers to the domain of climate geopolitics. While this chapter basically agrees that this distinction is rhetorically useful, it is conceptually confused because the virtue of justice is a foundational for addressing and interpreting questions of virtue ethics.

critically misrepresenting the ethical challenge in material and significant ways. “Rather than thinking of climate change as a problem caused by some nations and suffered by others,” suggests Jamieson, “it is more plausible to think of it as a problem with a half billion or so major contributors distributed throughout the globe.”¹⁴ As such, the troublesome consciences and lack of adaptive response to climate change that the *Bygdabyingar* exemplify may better correspond with the core problem.

Contrary to the popular impression, the task of climate ethics involves more than simply bringing the weight of the scientific consensus to bear on human capabilities. In juxtaposition, on one hand, these two stories illuminate how climate ethics needs to develop approaches that effectively address crucial shifts and materially destabilizing conditions. On the other, approached in terms of adaptation, climate ethics must acknowledge also structural asymmetries with respect to human agency. This has meant, typically, that climate ethics dwells in questions of historical or causal responsibility for anthropogenic climate change, principles of fairness, and strain to address why “private morality” matters. These are important questions. However, as the *Bygdaby* case indicates—and a moment of sincere reflection might confirm—lived experience of climate change suggests otherwise. These questions, as important as they are, distract ethical attention away from how poverty and radical inequality are entangled—perhaps distinct but enmeshed—with the so-called ecological challenge. In the context of climate change, the notion of radical inequality underscores how basic disparities perhaps preclude the ability to survive, and at best sustain a decent quality of life, basic livelihood and wellbeing in the face of climate change. As a matter of concern for the *chauras*, in sum, what might climate justice entail?

¹⁴ Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time.*, 8, and 197.

Relatedly, due to radical inequality, a particularly intercultural dynamic is raised to which climate ethics must be sensitive. Conflicting stories about globalization arise in these two cases. From the *Bygdabyingar*, we may hear myths of progress associated with modern globalization. From the *chauras*, basically, their point of view expresses a sense of resentment enfolded within in their overt denial of climate change, possibly intoning echoes of a colonial past. For climate ethics, as Willis Jenkins poignantly remarks, the deeper challenge involves the task of working productively in conditions of “moral pluralism and cultural conflict.” Climate ethics must draw perspectives toward basic disparities, raising awareness to the fact that cultural horizons may clash with respect, globalization, climate change, and justice.

To this end, a guiding question concerns the interdependence of material circumstances and communal narratives. In other words, climate change reveals how bound shared communal identities are to a particular place narrative. The climate scientist Mike Hulme may explain this point most efficaciously when he claims:

The idea of climate exists as much in the human mind and in the matrices of cultural practices as it exists as an independent and objective physical category. The multiple meanings of climate, and the ideological freightage we load onto interpretations and our interactions with it, are an essential part of making sense of what is happening around us today in our climate change discourses.¹⁵

Becoming more attuned to climate change, in other words, demands that people come to appreciate how, on the one hand, the issue presents humanity as an anthropogenic force that is physically reshaping ecosystems and, thus, is objective. Additionally, making sense of climate change (or not) is socially constructed that is, interpreted and developed through

¹⁵ Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28.

stories, narratives, and conversations. However, before entering the sphere of public opinion, climate ethics might effectively start with how these shifting material conditions affect the court of conscience.

To make sense of climate change, climate ethics may need to be undertaken not only as an intellectual and ethical challenge, but also emphatically in *affective* terms. An old style of climate advocacy, as previously stated and as a matter of course apparent in popular opinion, supposed that the public lacked enough information about climate change. This basic illiteracy, by that view, prevented the topic of climate change from entering electoral politics and ordinary activism. By contrast, in Norgaard's account, implicit denial points to subtler and no-less-real barriers for fuller responsiveness. Specifically, she outlines a form of "socially organized denial," as "a process through which climate change is kept out of the sphere of everyday life." In particular, "emotion management" performs a pivotal role.¹⁶ Norwegian informants, in her one-to-one interviews, confess that the mere topic creates a profound sense of dis-ease. As Norgaard reports, they express a wide range of emotions that inform the self-conscious choice to dismiss climate change from public conversation. Reasons for this social contract to which they tacitly agree vary according to types of feelings: fear, especially in a "loss of ontological security," helplessness, guilt, and anxiety about potential threats to individual and collective sense of identity.¹⁷ While this maintains an ethical silence due to the *political* dimension of emotions, for the typical citizen of Bygdaby in the practice of everyday life she experiences profound suffering, and usually in isolation.

¹⁶ Norgaard, *Living in Denial*, 123, 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–95, esp. Table 3.1 (p. 80).

By contrast, the *chauras* who explicitly deny the idea of climate change implicitly enact a process that sensitizes them to the suffering in their midst. As their islands erode, they mediate their collective experience through sermons, practices of storytelling that apparently help them to reconfigure their community and embrace the shifting material conditions. A particularly Islamic idiom sensitizes them to the struggle for their livelihood. As the visiting Khan remarks, some “foreshortened horizons bear witness to the unfolding of climate change through the intensification of existing scenes of suffering.”¹⁸ The communal acceptance, for instance, of the once-marginal dogs also stands in stark contrast to their formerly hostile attitudes. Adapting to circumstances, these narratives facilitate—or even authorize—a notion of ecological care that they come to embody, while they help shape crucial dispositions for confronting the necessary challenges ahead.

In the face of climate change, ethically, emotions serve an ambiguous role in practical matters of action. Lisa Kretz, an ethicist at Queen’s University in Canada, who studies the emotions in the experience of climate change, highlights that concerned agents become subject to both motivating and demotivating pressures.¹⁹ For the institutional setting of the university classroom, in this sense, leading teachers in the environmental humanities recognize how “the distressing realities of climate change constitute both obstacle and incitement to student engagement.”²⁰ In this sense, they confirm a major point of the Bygdaby case that, according to Norgaard, “tells a story about how profoundly difficult it can be to be both aware and informed at this point in human history.”²¹ For

¹⁸ Khan, “Dogs and Humans,” 262.

¹⁹ Lisa Kretz, “Climate Change: Bridging the Theory-Action Gap,” *Ethics and the Environment* 17, no. 2 (2012): 9–27.

²⁰ Stephen Siperstein, Shane Hall, and Stephen LeMenager, “Introduction,” in *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*, ed. Siperstein et al., 18–29 (New York: Routledge, 2017), cited at 22.

²¹ Norgaard *Living in Denial*, 217.

climate ethics, consequently, Kretz strongly urges that we probably need to consider new approaches so “to have theories and practices that reflect how emotion functions in tandem with critical thinking.”²²

In her university work and teaching responsibilities, Norgaard encounters how her American students similarly struggling with the confusion and guilt that they associate with climate change. Numerous studies confirm this experience, but it also more complex. According to the *Washington Post* and Kaiser Family Foundation, almost three-quarters of American teenagers and youth are convinced that climate change will adversely harm them, both personally as well as the rest of their generation. Alarming, this report reflects the fact that most American teens did not engage in any specific actions between 2016 and 2019. As a matter of fact, based on their investigations, only 1 in 4 American youths have engaged in direct actions. Less than half say they have specific steps to reduce their carbon footprint; when they do, they say that it is limited to recycling, reducing plastic use, and limiting their use of car transit. In 2010, the Yale Project on Climate Change sought to understand how many teenage students learned in school about climate change and strategies to reduce its effects, finding only 25% of Americans teenagers received important lessons. According to the *WP-KFF* report, a decade later, only 14% of students could reply that they had learned “a lot” in school about the subject of climate change.²³

²² Kretz, “Bridging the Theory-Action Gap,” 16.

²³ Sarah Kaplan and Emily Guskin, “Most teen say they’re frightened by climate change; 1 in 4 have taken action, poll shows,” *Washington Post*, Sept 16, 2019, available online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/most-american-teens-are-frightened-by-climate-change-poll-finds-and-about-1-in-4-are-taking-action/2019/09/15/1936da1c-d639-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c_story.html. The full *WP-KFF* survey is available online at: <https://files.kff.org/attachment/Chartpack-KFF-Washington-Post-Climate-Change-Survey>, see esp. Figure 36. For the Yale Project on Climate Change, see Anthony Leiserowitz, et al., “Climate Change in the American Mind: Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes in June 10” (New Haven; Fairfax, VA: Yale University, Yale Project on Climate Change Communications; George Mason University, 2010), which is available online: <https://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication-OFF/files/ClimateBeliefsJune2010.pdf>.

Asked to describe their reaction to climate change, 57% identified fear, instead of motivated and optimistic, but many of them also characterized themselves as angry, helpless, guilty, and uninterested. As a matter of fact, she regards one reason for this silence is “the overwhelming nature of the guilt that comes from being unable to escape participating in the social norms.”²⁴ For Norgaard, thus, the necessary shifts are profound:

our view shifts from one in which *understanding* of climate change and *caring* about ecological conditions and our human neighbors are in short supply to one whereby these qualities are acutely present but actively muted to protect individual identity and sense of empowerment and to maintain culturally produced conceptions of reality.²⁵

Listening to Norgaard, we can better understand how profoundly the basic problems are communal and motivational. More broadly, this ethical reality affects how we apprehend the purpose of ethical inquiry and reflection, arguably, it also alters the basic starting-point.

In *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*, Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer articulate how Anthropocene powers exert pressure on moral agency and unsettle our cultural assumptions about human flourishing, thus clarifying the purpose of ethical deliberation, namely “adjusting our conception of who we are to appropriately fit the new global context.”²⁶ Mike Hulme also notes that from the fringes of climate research and especially in their public appeals, scientists and advocates are using “the language of empathy, story-telling, trust, wisdom, humility, integrity, faith, hope, and love” that effectively “constitutes a re-discovery of virtue.”²⁷ With greater abundance, as Willis Jenkins observes, the academic literature of climate ethics involves a distinct turn to

²⁴ Ibid., 195–7, see also 222.

²⁵ Ibid., 207.

²⁶ Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction: Adapting Humanity,” in *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change: Human Virtues of the Future*, ed. Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, 1–25 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), see esp. 3–8. For a sizable sample of a growing body of literature in virtue, in response to climate change, see the many of the chapters in this volume.

²⁷ Mike Hulme, “Climate Change and Virtue: An Apologetic,” *Humanities* 3 (2014): 299–312, esp. 303.

virtue.²⁸ For specialists, virtue provides an alternative framework from that makes sense of responsive actions and inaction. However, a virtue approach also brings questions of the good life and flourishing into the sphere of climate change. This approach may elucidate cases of lived climate change experience. In this sense, such a basic approach might serve a necessary and beneficial role in assisting perplexed persons, who struggle to overcome significant challenges that chronically confound moral agency.

For climate ethics, in this adaptive vein, the transformative logic of virtue underscores two main constructive insights. As Kretz suggests, relatively few climate ethicists address the emotional distress that climate change creates as the starting point for ethical inquiry. First and foremost, encompassing the quotidian as the proper basis for ethical inquiry and self-examination, virtue ethics strives to harmonize the intellectual, ethical, and affective dimensions. We might benefit from regarding the *Bygdabyingar* as particularly emblematic of this struggle to restore a sense of moral agency in the face of climate change.²⁹ For whom is climate ethics meant? Second, relatedly, virtue ethics need not dwell on vices, deficiencies, and excesses, illuminating another reason for doing climate ethics. In short, the proper concern of virtue ethics is persons as agents. In this regard, their state is *emblematic* of the visceral struggle with climate change that typically disrupts the practice of everyday life. “The voices we have heard from Bygdaby and the

²⁸ Willis Jenkins, “The Turn to Virtue in Climate Ethics: Wickedness and Goodness in the Anthropocene,” *Environmental Ethics* 38, no. 1 (2016): 77–96.

²⁹ To be clear, within climate ethics, this is a relatively new point of emphasis and focus. For a similar basis of interpreting the significance of Norgaard’s research, see (her student) Stephen Siperstein, “Climate Change in Literature and Culture: Conversion, Speculation, Education” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2016), who writes: “As Kari Norgaard’s important sociological and anthropological work has shown, many people *already do* think, and feel, regularly about climate change. Counter to the dominant narrative that people simply don’t care, more and more people are in fact already grappling with the personal and emotional dimensions of climate change, even if they are not taking action. To put it more succinctly, the care’s already there” (5). This new starting-point, therefore, interprets and constructs the emblematic Bygdaby case differently, and in the light of radical inequality (i.e., as provided by the *chauras*).

United States are those of people who are deeply troubled,” Norgaard tells us, “who very much want another world, who would do a great deal to create change if they only knew how, who feel they can make a difference.” As such, we might come to recognize in the *Bygdabyingar*, unable to adapt and grow, a lack of prudential judgment.

1.2 Ways to Thinking Ethically about Climate Change: Four Virtue-Based Approaches

For Christian ethics, Willis Jenkins formulates a finer point on the constructive aims of ethical inquiry, writing: “The ethics of climate change therefore includes much more than evaluating policies and motivating action; it entails helping communities develop capabilities to take responsibility for the relations and powers in which they live.”³⁰ Concerning perplexed agents such as the *Bygdabyingar*, the initial step must serve the basic challenge of ethical thinking. Concurrently, the motivating reasons that virtue ethics provides may also cultivate understanding and more robust moral engagement. In addition to the affective dimension of climate ethics that virtue encompasses, this section provides a critical survey that constructively examines why a virtue approach is necessary for addressing the issue of climate change. Introducing climate ethics, the basic aim is to offer various points of access: 1) as a way to reframe climate change in terms of radical inequality and flourishing, with special concern for human dignity and capabilities as well as ecological integrity; 2) as a disciplined way to resist temptations, naming defective and problematic ways of thinking; 3) as a way to reorient ethical attention from prevailing cultural norms toward character and questions of the good life; 4) as a way of bringing due and necessary focus upon exemplary projects of social transformation. As such, guiding moral reasoning, these reasons can help develop virtue responses.

³⁰ Ibid., 17.

Bear in mind that ethical adaptation refers to a specific guiding concern, loosely: How do we begin to appropriately adjust ourselves to respond to climate change more adaptively? For our introductory purposes, from this virtue basis, these guidelines are meant to promote careful and constructive reflection about climate change. As such, importantly, virtue ethics is teleological. In other words, as will be introduced, the developmental perspective of virtue ethics specifically seeks to examine particular virtues, but also should expect tensions and challenges.³¹ Accordingly, we can anticipate a series of situations when we wrestle with a typical “climate change encounter”: initially, first, there is a vague awareness of living bound within a very particular cultural setting; second, one might realize frustrations in trying to comprehend the meaning of climate change; third, unsettled and disturbed, one may become conscientious of one’s own limitations and horizons; finally, assumptions may begin to unsettle as genuine reflection seriously engages with those initiatives that demonstrate necessary and beneficial shifts. In this final regard, the chapter advocates for the reform projects and “concrete particularities” that Willis Jenkins’s strategy of prophetic pragmatism provides, judging them furthermore as necessary sources for commitments based in solidarity.³²

1.2.1 “Cry of the Poor” and Crises of Flourishing: The Call of Ecological Conversion

Ethical approaches to climate change can benefit from interpreting the planetary situation and specific contexts in terms of flourishing. Sadly, much writing about climate change consists of strictly safeguarding extant conditions for the sake of economic prosperity. Contrariwise, as a critical lens, virtue ethics evaluates the current state and

³¹ Regarding this specific issue, see Nancy E. Snow, “Introduction,” in *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, ed. Snow, 1–16 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. 16n3.

³² The term “concrete particularity” is borrowed from Richard B. Miller, *Friends and Other Strangers: Studies in Religion, Ethics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 34–5, 309–48, without substantively engaging his broader agenda in the study of religious ethics. See fn69.

reflects alternatively the choice of accepting an adaptive sense of flourishing. Introducing virtues, for instance, Thompson and Bendik-Keymer suggest a foundational role for the philosophical concept of *eudaimonia* that concerns “human excellence in adapting ourselves to the challenges posed by global climate change.”³³ As such, basically, a virtue approach would be enabled to name those characteristics that are necessary and beneficial to become more fully human, and even outline some ways to those cultivate those virtues.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis certainly agrees with this critical stance. For instance, he gives us two candidate virtues conducive for ecological conversion. His account, however, is acutely aware of how climate change exacerbates radical inequality due to the disproportionate human impact on the poor and most vulnerable. In this regard, arguably, no voice has had a greater impact in dealing with climate change as a “moral” issue.³⁴ Indeed, since the IPCC’s 2014 report, the critical point is stressed that links how climate change further threatens both “fragile ecosystems” and the poorest in terms of “social vulnerability.” What is missing in most accounts of climate change, however, is this optic of climate change from the point of view of the poor and most vulnerable. In his encyclical, Pope Francis contributes his ability to signify radical inequality as the core challenge, particularly when he emphatically insists:

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both *the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor* (sec. 49).³⁵

³³ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 10.

³⁴ For secular audiences, in acknowledgement of Pope Francis’s moral and epistemic authority for a secular audience, see Dale Jamieson, “The Pope’s Encyclical and Climate Change Policy: Theology and Politics in *Laudato si'*,” *American Journal of International Law (AJIL) Unbound* 109 (2015): 122–6.

³⁵ For a theological articulation of this moral point, see Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

While many climate ethicists state this is the case, the virtue perspective that Pope Francis provides makes this struggle central to the ethical challenge. Moreover, he implies that this radical inequality undermines to attain an integral sense of respect and human dignity.

Adapting human flourishing to the realities of anthropogenic climate change is liable to overlook radical inequality, which is one reason why climate ethics ought to adopt a minimal threshold of human dignity. In Pope Francis's account, he makes clear how adaptive responses and lines of dialogical approach must become accountable for "the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet" (sec. 16).³⁶ Water, for example, is a material domain that animates Pope Francis's concern. Access to safe and potable water is threatened because of a broad range of factors that include pollutants, desertification, and privatization to name a few. Understood in a context of radical inequality, however, necessary access to water offers a basic condition that serves human dignity. This right is necessary for all people to attain a decent quality of life. Considering the widespread ecological crisis, Pope Francis judges: "Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because *they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity*" (sec. 30). The notion of flourishing could exalt the moral development and prosperity of a privileged few, but Pope Francis insists that according to the unfair circumstances that climate change is creating, the capabilities of the most vulnerable to survive should be a forefront concern.

Poverty, of course, is a complex reality. To gain a deeper understanding climate ethics must look closer specifically to local contexts, especially as material and cultural

³⁶ As a primary concern that runs throughout the text, at the outset of his encyclical, the poor are identified at the heart of his appeal. A reader, thus, becomes disposed to a more global perspective that accounts for the human impacts of climate change, especially concerning the poor and the injustice of radical inequality.

concerns are interlocked. Thus, in this context, we should ask: “What, more specifically, does human flourishing involve?”³⁷ Listening to one of the elderly *chauras*, Naveeda Khan describes that existential survival involves the challenge of remaining human (*manush*) in the face of destabilizing conditions. Signs of living well under these circumstances still may emerge, such as when many *chauras* incorporated the once-marginal dogs into their community. In a similar sense, Pope Francis marvels how occasionally “a human ecology is practiced by the poor despite numerous hardships” (sec. 148).³⁸ For example, from an Arctic perspective, the Inuit spokeswoman Sheila Watt-Cloutier expresses how ice—a basic material condition for her Inuit culture—is integral for understanding what it means for Inuit people to thrive. In her global advocacy, she uses human rights language to bridge an intercultural gap, but it becomes clear that she is speaking about an admirable way of life that is being jeopardized. Due to melting conditions, she worries that it will no longer be viable to build “character skills learned on the hunt,” and particularly virtues such as patience, boldness, tenacity, focus, courage, sound judgment and wisdom. As ice recedes, due to anthropogenic climate change, the Inuit confront an ethical challenge of an entirely different order.³⁹

For this reason, these examples may elucidate important insights that virtue ethics has traditionally struck: How do we live well? Due to a rapidly changing climate, challenged, some vulnerable communities confront existential problems that impact what

³⁷ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 8.

³⁸ The poor may exemplify a demonstrable sense of agency despite non-ideal conditions that would victimize them: “A wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment,” Pope Francis elaborates, “The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging” (sec. 148).

³⁹ Sheila Watt-Cloutier, *The Right to Be Cold: One Woman’s Story of Protecting Her Culture, the Arctic, and the Whole Planet* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2015), 254; cp. Willis Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers,” 75.

it means to live well. The example she and her Inuit community set could lend a substantially different point of emphasis to the ethical claim that, self-consciously and purposefully, virtue ethics offers a distinct alternative to other ways of thinking about justice, with special focus toward the “*processes* of adapting ourselves—individually and collectively—can be done well, or not.”⁴⁰ For the sake of the common good, however, Pope Francis articulates a more important and forceful reason why the poor and most vulnerable should be prioritized: typically, the affluent live “far removed from the poor, without little direct contact with their problems.” In other words, the yawning gap between the poor, who adversely suffer as a result of climate change, and the privileged, who tacitly accept and generally continue to intensify human domination of climate change, undermines the solidarity that justice requires. Adapting well, thus, would mean attending to the need of those marginal voices, who are systematically excluded and unfairly impacted.

The passage from *Laudato si'* that began this section concludes with the powerful assertion that an ecological approach concerns justice to “hear both *the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor*.” Given the “technocratic paradigm,” however, Pope Francis worries that another gap might affect virtue responses. For the affluent, whose habits this paradigm increasingly forms, the paradigmatic vision of flourishing is dictated by the market forces that command us “to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us” (sec. 106). Consequently, moreover, Pope Francis remarks: “It needs to be said that, generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded.” For him, “far removed from the poor, with little direct

⁴⁰ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 8.

contact with their problems,” the affluent and privileged are impaired by “lack of physical contact and encounter.” In effect, he judges that generally these habits permit “a numbing of conscience” (sec. 49). Considering climate change, generally, a “technocratic” bias truncates horizons and may stunt development of moral sensibilities of those who inhabit places of power and privilege. Still, as Pope Francis stresses, there is a basic choice: to accept this situation, or to integrate a more dialogical approach. Towards dialogical encounter, interdependent with the abilities of the poor and most vulnerable to enjoy a “fair share,” flourishing entails those conditions that unify. This situation, he attributes to the affluent being “far removed from the poor, without little direct contact with their problems” and a “lack of physical contact and encounter.” In effect, “a numbing of conscience” (sec. 49) occurs, rendering agents less capable of acting in the interest of the common good. Arguably, the encyclical *Laudato si’* targets primarily those who live in such a bias-induced horizon.

1.2.2. Cultivating Dispositions to Resist Paralysis: Stephen Gardiner’s “Perfect Moral Storms”

Ethical thinking about climate change poses a daunting task. In addition to the ubiquity of the phenomenon and the sheer diversity of climate change experiences, there are also a few significant temptations. In the face of climate change, a general temptation is to become paralyzed. This would vacate a sense of moral responsibility. For the moral philosopher Stephen Gardiner, the lens of virtue ethics is an integral part of approaching climate change as an ethical challenge. Despite his own cultivated wariness for overstating the power of theory with respect to climate change, he uses virtue as especially instructive

for conducting ethical analysis.⁴¹ Consider how Gardiner reminds his readers that regarding climate change, as with any other problem, the virtue ethicist “seeks to identify the characteristic ‘temptations’ present in certain situations, positions, or ways of life.” About climate change, as Gardiner infers, the act of naming these “vulnerabilities” or “temptations” helps us “resist acting badly, but also in coming to understand ourselves as moral agents.”⁴² Put simply, it can help form character, avoiding “bad” characteristics while gaining clarity into our relationship with respect to good traits. For climate ethics, it would contribute to developing dispositions that give greater moral clarity about the planetary situation and our place in it.

How to interpret climate change as an ethical problem can become an intractable point of contention. One particularly powerful temptation, as Gardiner identifies, is treating climate change as a tragic problem of the “global commons” as most international problems are typically understood. In his pioneering *A Perfect Moral Storm*, Gardiner does not mean to dissuade readers from appreciating climate change in terms of justice and specifically in terms of global fairness.⁴³ Rather, from an ethical perspective, he wishes to show how portraying climate change *metaphorically* has its advantages and disadvantages. In terms

⁴¹ “Theoretical ineptitude” is one of Gardiner’s three metaphorical “storms.” Basically, he writes that ethical concepts and theoretical frameworks are “poorly” adapted for human power on both a global and multigenerational scale. See Gardiner, *Perfect Moral Storm*, 41–4. See also Jeffrey R. Di Leo, “Can Theory Save the Planet? Critical Climate Change and the Limits of Theory,” *symplekē* 21, no. 1-2 (2013): 35 (27–36). For variations, see Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 144–77, and Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 1–14.

⁴² Gardiner, *Perfect Moral Storm*, 4. He alludes to Platonic, Aristotelian, and Humean accounts of virtue ethics (n5). See also his defense of virtue ethics through a comparison of Jane Austen and climate economics in ch. 9, 301–38; idem, “Introduction: Virtue Ethics, Here and Now,” in *Virtue Ethics, Old and New*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner, 1–9 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); idem, “Should We Embrace a ‘New,’ Expansionist Agenda for the Virtues?” in *Crisis and Critique: Philosophical Analysis and Current Events*, eds. Anne Siegetsleitner, Andreas Oberprantacher, Marie-Luisa Frick, Ulrich Metsch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021). For critique of his virtue approach, Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 80–2, 83.

⁴³ For global justice, primarily, Gardiner addresses relations between nation-states. For a groundbreaking book, with such a basic dependence on virtue theory, the lack of development about justice particularly as a virtue is particularly striking.

of “global fairness,” for instance, the putative meaning of climate could mire ethical thinking into a stalemate. For Gardiner, ultimately, “global commons” insufficiently encapsulates the challenge climate ethics because this image tends to blind us with respect to the spatiotemporal reach of climate change. Rather, explains Gardiner: “Our problem is profoundly global, intergenerational, and theoretical.” As we attempt to understand climate change, thus, the problem basically implicates global, generational, and theoretical dimensions. At first, the intrinsic complexity of climate change usually creates bewilderment for aptly concerned citizens, such as those in Bygdaby. However, this dimension may overshadow how the effects of climate change are extremely unjust for future generations, not to mention the poor who contribute little to the problem.

Although the difference is more than simply how to describe climate change, how we understand the situation bears on the kind of response that is determined as suitable. If one views the challenges of climate change through the lens of the “global commons,” the result is a partial and flawed perspective. In contrast, when he writes: “When these factors come together they pose a ‘perfect moral storm’ for ethical action.” If we were simply interested in treating climate change strictly or primarily as an issue of global fairness, then, conscientious agents risk becoming complicit in a “tyranny of the contemporary.”⁴⁴ Future generations, after all, ought not be disregarded in ethical deliberations about climate change. If political choices do not consider the probable impact on future generations, Gardiner concludes, the present generation exercises absolute control and power over

⁴⁴ Gardiner, *Perfect Moral Storm*, ch. 5, 143–84. For a virtue perspective that considers this issue as a particular vice, see Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, “Presentism the Magnifier,” paper presented at “Thinking and Acting Ecologically,” 10th ISEE/IAEP conference, University of East Anglia, UK, 12 June 2013, available at: <https://sites.google.com/case.edu/bendikkeymer/emerging-work?authuser=0> (accessed 21 November 2018) and in a forthcoming book, *Involving Anthroponomy: On Decoloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

subsequent ones. The global, intergenerational, and theoretical factors—each a metaphorical “storm”—fails to encompass the entire scope of the problem. In a sense, as suggests Gardiner, understanding challenge of climate change requires and yet surpasses the limits of discursive reason.

Helping persons as agents be aware of the panoply of temptations that, in effect, distract focus from self-examination may be a crucial task for virtue thinking. In contrast to the “commons” paradigm, “perfect storm” offers a different metaphorical way of understanding the challenge of climate change. Seeking to create a habit of vigilance, with respect to these tendencies—as Gardiner imagines—could also reshape public dialogues. In this context, a similar pattern of bewilderment and ethical frustration may further support social inertia. Much like the *Andrea Gail*, the fishing vessel in Sebastian Junger’s famous book, agents are confounded and perplexed at “the unusual intersection of a number of serious, and mutually reinforcing, problems, which creates an unusual and perhaps unprecedented challenge.” The interaction of converging storms, as the metaphor goes, only seems in turn to intensify each storm. In the case of climate change, however, the “storms” converge to overwhelm reasons that would motivate and support agents in becoming accountable. For climate ethics, it is this puzzling character of climate change that leads some to describe the challenge as structurally “wicked,” precisely due to its intrinsic complexity, abstract causation, indeterminate nature, and excessive scales of human agency.⁴⁵ But, by Gardiner’s view, if we stress the uniquely puzzling nature of the issue, climate ethics becomes part of the agency-defeating patterns that predominate.

⁴⁵ See Stephen M. Gardiner, “Climate Ethics in a Dark and Dangerous Time,” *Ethics* 127 (2017): 434–5 (430–65). Gardiner does not support this stance. For him, categorizing climate change as a “wicked problem” seems: to excuse clumsy and “open-ended” deliberations; overstate its implications because social problems

Regarding the climate crisis, still, Gardiner highlights a particularly effective use of virtue thinking. For the perplexed, in response to climate change, he demonstrates specifically how virtue thinking is instructive in gaining moral clarity, avoiding vicious cycles, and eventually identifying sources of motivation.⁴⁶ If made aware, then concerned agents may already be building character with the ability to discern these wicked *effects* in themselves and others. Thus, climate ethics may begin to outline more fruitful ways of approaching the crisis of climate change ethically.

1.2.3. Reshaping Characters:

After Dale Jamieson's Lament about Ethical Limits

Does climate change alter what it means to live a good life? Does living a good life matter for responses to climate change? Does this alter our sense of flourishing? If so, could this stimulate agents to develop new responsibilities and rethink the form of a good life?⁴⁷ How do we live in the silence that climate change induces?⁴⁸ Questions like these ask us to shift attention from decisions how we judge climate change to what it says about human character.⁴⁹ If, as Gardiner's approach indicates, climate ethics requires closing the gap between the unfolding reality of the planetary situation and where we stand as agents, then in light of this reality there is a need to reengage the wellsprings of moral agency.⁵⁰ For struggling agents, who might also lament institutional failure, Dale Jamieson takes an

typically involve difference in scale; and preclude mainstream input and analysis. In his critical survey of climate ethics, he does not include Willis Jenkins. Cp. Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 149–89, esp. 170–2, “Turn to Virtue,” 80–2.

⁴⁶ See Gardiner, “Epilogue,” in *A Perfect Moral Storm*, 439–42.

⁴⁷ Questions are modified from those that shape the premise of his critical survey of the field; see Willis Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 77–8.

⁴⁸ Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 177.

⁴⁹ N.b., the “political” is understood more broadly than the geopolitics of climate change. This is articulated in the comparative reflection but being underscored here. The specific sense of the political sphere is the cultural domain *between* individuals and institutions.

⁵⁰ Here, recall the “shape of the problem,” and corresponding the focus of ethical inquiry with the “500 million who emit half of the world's carbon,” cf. Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 197, also 199. In short, nation-states are not the only actors of special significance.

epistemic cue from virtue ethics, as he suggests “green virtues” provide ways for human character to become more attuned to this expanded web of relations.⁵¹ In order to appreciate this reorientation and the process of developing virtues, Jamieson brings into focus the crucial importance of identifying the social practices that substantiate a meaningful life, namely “the activities we engage in that are in accordance with our values.”⁵²

Here, with Jamieson, we can make two key points pertinent for a virtue-based approach to climate ethics. First, the prevailing sense of negligibility about personal actions affects ethical comportment and represents an immediate barrier to motivate a commitment to ethical adaptation.⁵³ Whereas Gardiner turns to metaphors to interrogate conceptually how we imagine climate change, Jamieson strikes at the experiential and emotional core of the challenge. Thus, Jamieson acknowledges, observing how the attitude that typically prevails due to the scale of the problem is “it doesn’t matter what I do.” The idea of climate change and the reality of humanity’s planetary power might effectively discourage moral agency at this more personal level. It is this subtler form of denial that climate ethics must address. This temptation must concern those dubious agents who wish to pursue virtues. In short, as Jamieson writes: “What we do matters because of its effects on the world, but what we do also matters because of its effects on ourselves.”⁵⁴ This pivotal question between the “world-affecting” and the “self-affecting” is the domain of virtue ethics,

⁵¹ The methodological question concerning the ecological dimension of virtue ethics is a knotty one. A disparate sub-field of environmental virtue ethics has developed in the last two decades, with some parallel theological developments. This is the principal question of chapter 3.

⁵² Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 200. As a general appeal to virtue, Jamieson acknowledges, his attitude is more “instrumental” (186n20) than traditional theorists and their contemporary proponents.

⁵³ For a fine introduction to this issue, see Melissa Lane, *Eco-Republic: What Ancients Can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 52–73.

⁵⁴ Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, ch. 6, esp. 179–82, cited at 182; also 8. In common with traditional virtue ethics, concerning its practical aims, this book is best read as attempting to reach a broader audience—not strictly intended for specialists.

addressing the ordinary terrain that bothers persons and their mutual concerns between integrity and welfare.

As for the second point, contrary to climate ethicists who decry moral corruption, Jamieson suggests that social inertia may be due to a limit of our “commonsense morality.” Cultural notions of ordinary responsibility may fail to sufficiently register the problem of climate change in either intellectual or *affective* terms. Take, for example, the paradigmatic case that concerns an ordinary sense of responsibility, namely “the morally suspect act of Jack stealing Jill’s bicycle.” Typically, responsibility refers to a situation such as this when “an individual acting intentionally harms another individual; both the individuals and the harm are identifiable; and the individuals and the harm are both closely related in time and space.” By contrast, human agency exercises climate change across time, space, and without conscious intention. Still, many practices in everyday life can feel morally suspect. For instance, should the Norwegian with a guilty conscience drive his car to work? Nevertheless, as a problem involving collective action, many contribute in seemingly small but consistent ways to “outcomes that we neither desire nor intend.”⁵⁵ Thus, he implies, these activities must become morally suspect.⁵⁶ The pivotal question, practical speaking, seems *how* to foster in ourselves the sorts of dispositions sensitive to the way lifestyles are entangled with climate change.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 147–50. Similarly, Willis Jenkins suggests why ethics is imperiled: “Received ideas of justice do not anticipate moral agency exercised cumulatively across generational time, aggregately through ecological systems, and nonintentionally over evolutionary futures” (cf. *Future of Ethics*, 1).

⁵⁶ Dale Jamieson initially referred to this as the so-called “soccer mom dilemma,” cf. *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92; see chapter 4. In *Reason in a Dark Time*, he writes: “Even most of us who care deeply about climate change would have to admit, if we were honest, that we do not feel like killers when we fly or drive” (7). Perhaps “embarrassed, ashamed, or hypocritical,” he adds, “but we do not really feel that we are worse than Mafia hit men.”

In reviving virtues specifically as a matter for climate ethics, this formative aspect also points to both sides of the political dynamic. Jamieson, for example, recognizes that these contemporary virtues do not need to conform to ancient values. Still, are not the ubiquitous American attitudes that success, celebrity, and fame determine the value of a life, “reminiscent of the Greek idea that it is honor that gives life meaning”?⁵⁷ For many Americans, Jamieson wishes to point out, life is basically “instrumental” in a manner not dissimilar to the Hellenistic customs that virtue ethics originally addressed; life becomes a product of sorts to be evaluated primarily through the esteem of others. Contrariwise, as Jamieson perceives, the developmental perspective of virtue grants “the priority of process over product, the journey over the destination, and the doing over what is done.” To be clear, this neither dispels the darkness of climate change nor eliminates troublesome episodes, but, as Jamieson urges, “seen as part of a life that is engaged in valuable activities, [these difficulties] will not threaten the sense of meaningfulness that sustains us.”⁵⁸

1.2.4. Exemplary Adaptation:

Willis Jenkins’s Prophetic Pragmatism and “Cosmological Temptations”

Besides attending to character, underlining the public domain, virtue ethics also appreciates the role of exemplarity. Dale Jamieson, for instance, states that: “Our thoughts and *actions* can inspire others, change their lives, and even affect the course of history.”⁵⁹ Developing virtues depends somehow on exemplary figures. In the case of climate change, admiring the ethical adaptation of others and their characteristics as exemplary may provide a critical source for self-examination. Similarly, though in a more social manner,

⁵⁷ Similarly, drawing on Plato, Melissa Lane evaluates contemporary consumerism with the Platonic criticism of *pleonexia* in *Eco-republic*, esp. 32–46. This theme is fundamentally narrative and so will be addressed in chapter 2. In chapter 3, Lane’s ecological hermeneutic to Platonic virtues is considered.

⁵⁸ Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 183, 184.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8. Emphasis mine. Jamieson does not develop this notion while sketching “green virtues.”

Willis Jenkins seeks to identify exemplary “reform projects,” that is, social initiatives or movements that are “trying to make their moral inheritances support adaptive patterns of action.”⁶⁰ Jenkins finds such sites of ethical adaptation as instructive in the face of a multifaceted problem such as climate change.

Two key insights help to indicate how such an approach decisively informs and is not meant as merely instructive. First, as argued in his book *The Future of Ethics*, ethical thinking needs to become less subject to the “cosmological temptation.” For Jenkins, this represents the urge that “unprecedented challenges require religious and ethical thinkers to narrate a new story or retrieve a forgotten moral vision in order to reorient humanity’s moral consciousness.” It is an urge that in Jenkins’s opinion is especially due to the sort of atmospheric powers and unprecedented features of climate change. For theological perspectives of climate change the overwhelming nature of the situation might “tempt ethicists to dwell in moral cosmology, proposing foundational metaphors and symbols by which agents could better interpret the world of human responsibility.” After surveying this specialized field, Jenkins’s notion may also resonate with various temptations within other social milieus. A personal confession might disclose this inclination as habitual.⁶¹ Critically, however, this temptation displaces ethical focus from the transformation of people that is the proper concern of virtue ethics.

Another form of resistance to ethical adaptation is the prevalent conception that ethics supposes a trickle-down effect from elites. Jenkins, for example, regards this specific

⁶⁰ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 4.

⁶¹ Jenkins aims to illustrate these grave limitations by critiquing work of others, particularly Sallie McFague and Michael Northcott, but, as he acknowledges, he cannot exclude himself from this criticism (cf. *Future of Ethics*, vii). As subject to the cosmological temptation, he overlooked and passed over concrete problems while surveying Christian environmental ethics, *Ecologies of Grace: Christian Theology and Environmental Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

assumption as especially conditioning the cosmological temptation and mutually informing much ethical inquiry in theological communities. For Jenkins, supposing “professional moralists take the lead in reforming those beliefs” is misguided for responding to climate change. What makes this assumption so problematic, for him, is that often professional moralists hold this assumption as well as a prevalent cultural assumption. For Jenkins, both guiding assumptions, namely the “cosmological” and the “applied,” conspire to frustrate attempts to restore moral agency and are ineffective for guiding ethical change.

Consider, for instance, how Jenkins regards the differences to have an important ethical bearing when he critiques the cosmological strategies of two prominent Protestant theologians, Sallie McFague and Michael Northcott. For McFague’s theological framework, ethical reflection about climate change starts by interrogating problematic views of God, humanity, and the world to provide a “different language for talking about God and ourselves.”⁶² Northcott, on the other hand, criticizes the neo-liberal foundations of the global political order while interpreting Christianity as a possible, countercultural force.⁶³ Much more could be said about both approaches. For Jenkins, and for our present purposes, “both argue that Christian climate ethics must begin by reconstructing the ideas and metaphors that give rise to action.”⁶⁴

However, this highlights how ethical thinking becomes subject to the agency-defeating aspects of the ethical challenge. About this initial misstep, Jenkins writes,

if the first step to taking responsibility for climate is reconstructing anthropology, then responsibility will always be deferred, waiting for

⁶² Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 3. For a situated approach of a practical bent, see Sallie McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

⁶³ Similarly, Jenkins’s criticizes Michael Northcott, *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). For development of this theological approach, see Michael Northcott, *A Political Theology of the Climate* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013).

⁶⁴ Willis Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers,” 67.

cultural conversion to a better worldview. That is precisely how the theoretical storm works to defeat practical responsibility: by paralyzing action before the ineptitude of our ideas for interpreting our problems.⁶⁵

While such an approach to climate change “abstracts ethics from concrete problems,” as Jenkins states, it also “seems to underscore the cultural impossibility of generating responsible agency.” Critically, this approach fails to appreciate the “wicked” effects of climate change that ordinarily disorient and perplex ethical thinking. Moreover, it tends to neglect the needs of struggling agents themselves. Ultimately, this approach makes for a poor ethical strategy for addressing the manifold problem of climate change, and particularly as we shall consider the deeper challenge concerning the “conditions of moral pluralism and cultural conflict.”

Rather, by contrast, attending to reform projects not only underscores the cultural possibility of becoming more responsible for social and ecological relations, it also may account more adequately for the emotional climate of such a communal matrix. Jenkins is one climate ethicist who describes climate change as a “wicked” problem in order to pinpoint how climate change as an ethical challenge “overwhelms moral agency.” For Jenkins, it enables a more realistic view of the cultural process of social transformation. Think, for instance, of the historic figures of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as well as their cultural legacies. Drawing on these analogies, Jenkins attempts to articulate an alternative frame of reference that more effectively situates ethics in response to the cluster of complex challenges that climate change represents. Likewise, in the spirit of these figures and their manner of confronting social challenges, reform projects help redefine and demonstrate the possibility of ethical adaptation and cultural change.

⁶⁵ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 77, 42–3, cited at 43; see also 74–7. N.b., Jenkins reads and evaluates them through the critical lens of “theoretical ineptitude” (see fn41).

Regarding climate ethics and method, a sustained focus on exemplary “reform projects” as movements might underscore for perplexed agents that the possibility of ethical adaptation is possible. In this sense, the pragmatist bent toward exemplars informs the basis for adaptive moral learning.

In sum, as these various virtue-based approaches attempt to articulate, virtue epistemology can be both instructive and informative for introducing agency into climate ethics. In principle, such approaches underscore how context may challenge and empower ethical thinking about climate change. In order to motivate and support such ethical thinking, virtue theorizes: 1) human flourishing especially with respect to basic human dignity and its interrelation with ecological integrity; 2) the sorts of critical dispositions that, if exercised, foster the necessary skills of discernment; 3) critical and constructive attention toward social practices that may occasion self-examination; 4) the political importance of actual examples who show the possibility of ethical adaptation and may inspire others to become more virtuous themselves. For perplexed agents, such as the *Bygdabyingar*, this may reorient and situate ethical perspectives with respect to the shifting material conditions that the idea of climate change represents.

1.3 *Prophetic Pragmatism: Reform Projects, Moral Agency, and Solidarity*

Although virtue helpfully shifts the issue of climate change in ethical focus to the transformation of people, it is important to recognize some concerns. Willis Jenkins forges his strategy of prophetic pragmatism over the course of a book, *The Future of Ethics*, and a series of articles. In reply, a methodological reflection on the basic foundations for approaching climate ethics can point to how virtue ethics complements the strategy of prophetic pragmatism, and how the two might mutually reinforce each other. Following

the method of prophetic pragmatism, likewise, virtue ethics supposes a strategy from-below that is distinguished by its sources and ways of proceeding.⁶⁶ This section takes a closer look at Willis Jenkins’s strategy of prophetic pragmatism, identifying three specific areas to which his basic methodology contributes to climate ethics.⁶⁷ Two focal points are examined in his ethical strategy of prophetic pragmatism, namely its adaption of a case-method as critical for emplacing religion and subsequently how the crucial issue of moral agency is underscored. Based on these, I suggest, concerned agents may foster the sorts of commitments that develop the virtue of solidarity. He models some of these meanings in his own dialogical engagement with *Pachamama* advocates, a climate justice movement based in Latin America. Due to his method, such an exemplary project is crucial as he emphatically supposes that ethics “is learned in bodies, carried by practices, and formed into repertoires that teach agents how to see and solve problems.”⁶⁸

1.3.1. *Adopting a Case-Method*

Nowhere in *The Future of Ethics* does Jenkins mention “casuistry” *per se* or case-method as a core element of his ethical strategy.⁶⁹ However, as he explicates, a basic distinction holds for an ethical strategy that begins by working on concrete problems that

⁶⁶ Jenkins prefers a responsibility framework but has occasionally turned toward virtue ethics. See his concern for moral formation in *The Future of Ethics*, esp. ch. 7, “Intergenerational Risk and the Future of Love,” 282–322, and later articles, such as “Turn to Virtue” and “Mysterious Silence.”

⁶⁷ At first, Jenkins describes his ethical approach as “nonfoundational” and “pluralist” (see, e.g., Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 6). Nonetheless, a basic method still exists and deserves serious consideration.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁹ However, see his initial consideration of casuistic methods as integral to ethical reasoning in “Islamic Law and Environmental Ethics: How Jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) Mobilizes Practical Reform,” *Worldviews* 9, no. 3 (2005): 338–64, esp. 348: “Requiring the precise ‘illa [i.e., rationale] prevents *qiyas* [“analogical reasoning”] from loosely associative casuistry, making it part of the ongoing discovery of God’s will. By establishing ‘the substantive relationship that exists between a linguistic proposition in the original texts and the new case or problem confronting the believer’, *qiyas* also maintains both dynamism and continuity in processes of reform (Hallaq 1997: 101, 84–5).” Also, arguably, this becomes crucial for understanding how he interprets *analogically* the contemporary lessons from King and Bonhoeffer in “Conclusion: Christian Social Ethics after Bonhoeffer and King” (2010), *The Future of Ethics* (2013), esp. 11, 82–104, and “Doing Theological Ethics with Incompetent Christians” (2017), esp. 61–5.

challenge practical reasoning. Arguably, the overall purpose of Jenkins's text is to re-think from a Christian perspective an ethical method to climate change, innovating an approach from the ground up; it is also one that is innovative with respect to climate ethics as a field in general. One productive way to interpret Jenkins's methodological shift is through Richard B. Miller's notion of "concrete particularity." Describing recent shifts from the normative dimension of ethical reflection toward more historical, descriptive, and even comparative endeavors, Miller suggests that *particularity* is vital material for practical reasoning and moral deliberation. This carries forward an Aristotelian insight inasmuch, according to Miller, as "practical reasoning is a special kind of knowledge that requires us to pay attention to circumstances and conditions that intrude on our thoughts, feelings, and contexts."⁷⁰ Thus, for instance, just as the cosmological temptation constantly exposes ethical thinking to these problematic intrusions, prophetic pragmatism brings ethical deliberation back to earth, so to speak, by grounding ethical attention in concrete challenges and actual changes.

For Jenkins's prophetic pragmatism, or "reform projects" are foundational and key for his agenda of ethical adaptation. Attending to concrete particularity, they constitute a form of "case-based reasoning." Take, for example, how Jenkins enlists the Christian watermen families on the Chesapeake's Tangier Island as a case about a specific "reform project." Much environmental pragmatism, criticizes Jenkins, remains narrowly concerned with the macro-level of ecosystem management. By contrast, for Jenkins, prophetic

⁷⁰ Miller, *Friends and Other Strangers*, 34, cf. Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Methodological reflections are rare, but he cites William Schweiker, "On Religious Ethics," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker, 1–15 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

pragmatism privileges the theological creativity of reform projects. The Pentecostal families on Tangier exemplify how religion may become an asset for climate ethics. Strikingly, the islanders initially cited and employed “biblical themes of human dominion to support their resistance to what they saw as imposition of an environmentalist worldview.” When the anthropologist Susan Drake Emmerich, a fellow evangelical, moved to Tangier, she joined a scripture-reading group with local women. Finding a scriptural basis for their own management ethic of the Chesapeake, these women came to interpret the fishery decline as a *specifically* theological problem. Subsequently, at a local church service, several dozen watermen performed a public confession of past practices. In this communal manner, Jenkins explains, “they deployed the practice of repentance to authorize a new pattern of cultural action,”⁷¹ namely sustainable fishing in their region of the Chesapeake.

This is a minor example in Jenkins’s account but, for our purposes, it punctuates four possible lessons with respect to ethical adaptation. First, this case exemplifies how members of a reform project may engage tradition to “simultaneously sustain and revise,”⁷² while restoring a sense of moral agency. For perplexed agents such as the *Bygdabyingar*, as the possibility of ethical adaptation becomes observable these lessons begin to provide a standard by which to measure themselves. For ethicists, it is also illustrative of theological creativity to concrete challenges. As Jenkins notes, these examples provide a “way to begin from the problems of the world as it is, and yet still expect deep transformation.” As such, the case may demonstrate how religion might come to matter for

⁷¹ Ibid., 173–4.

⁷² Ibid., 8.

responding to climate change.⁷³ Finally, this case situates ethical attention to specific sites, performing the complex process of situating a hermeneutic to the interaction of religion and place that the comparativist Manuel Vasquez names “emplacement.”⁷⁴ Subsequently, for a religious matrix, a lesson may be that ecological relations may also become a source of theological “learning and ongoing moral transformation.”⁷⁵ Still, more widely, for a culture at once supremely confident in economic and technological measures—analogue perhaps to historical contexts of casuistry—a climate of ethical doubt predominates. Thus, a casuistic, problem-focused approach to ethical thinking, Jenkins suggests, might occasion new insights.⁷⁶

Moreover, culturally self-conscious, Jenkins situates his hermeneutic of climate ethics within “conditions of moral pluralism and cultural conflict.”⁷⁷ Privileging this contextual factor, Jenkins understands the principal goal of his strategy to foster “pluralist exchanges” over shared problems. For instance, when elaborating a case-based, problem-focused approach, he notices how pragmatists specifically tend to “serially overlook religious communities and faith-involved practices,” and how that absence may be

⁷³ On the omission of religion, one can survey: Robin Attfield, “Ethics of Climate Change,” in *Environmental Ethics: An Overview for the Twenty-First Century* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014), 202–20; Jeremy J. Schmidt, Peter G. Brown, and Christopher J. Orr, “Ethics in the Anthropocene: A Research Agenda,” *The Anthropocene Review* 3, no. 3 (2016): 188–200; Byron Williston, *The Ethics of Climate Change: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming). Regarding this limited interaction Willis Jenkins, Evan Berry, and Luke Beck Kreider, “Religion and Climate Change,” *Annual Reviews* 12, no. 57 (2018): 10.

⁷⁴ For the materialist theory of religion that Jenkins adopts: *Future of Ethics*, 59 n3; also idem, “Review of *How the World’s Religions Are Responding to Climate Change: Social Scientific Investigations*, ed. Robin Globus, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-Lay,” *Human Ecology* 42 (2014): 503–5; and “Feasts of the Anthropocene: Beyond Climate Change as a Special Object in the Study of Religion,” in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, no. 1 (2017): 69–81, cf. Manuel Vasquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 291–320.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁶ For a re-consideration of high casuistry’s legacy, see James F. Keenan, S.J., and Thomas A. Shannon, “Contexts of Casuistry: Historical and Contemporary,” in *Contexts of Casuistry*, ed. Keenan and Shannon (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 221–31. On reasons for the adoption of casuistic method in theological ethics, see Christine Gudorf and James E. Huchingson, *Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), esp. 285–95.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

attributable to “cosmological” tendencies of the theological approaches.⁷⁸ As many theological approaches to climate or ecological ethics presuppose the principal focus ought to be belief and worldviews, as opposed to social practices and reform, religion according to pragmatists and others seems ill suited for the concrete challenges. His strategy, painstakingly, intends to illustrate how engaging religion becomes an asset for the work of social transformation and cultural change in response to climate change.

Critical participation is key, therefore, for climate ethicists. On the one hand, Jenkins’s strategy distinguishes itself from conventional approaches in theological ethics through his focus on actual changes, not prospective ones. The “pragmatic” bent, he argues, means “doing ethics with imperfect concepts and incompetent communities in anticipation that the work of responding to problems can fire the moral imagination, improve our concepts, and make communities more competent to meet their challenges.”⁷⁹ In other words, he means to reverse the order of a theological method, starting with social practices as the basis of ethical and potentially theological reflection. Similarly, on the other hand, for secular modes of climate ethics the methodological point is to be less discursive and more contextual, working within a particular communal matrix. “Amidst fears of cultural collapse,” Jenkins supposes, “ethics must generate new possibilities of moral agency.”

1.3.2. *Sustaining Ethical Focus on Moral Agency*

Approaches such as Jenkins’s are designed to elucidate how ethical thinking works when an audience engages it, and so are broadly understood as pragmatic. At the crux of climate ethics, one of the key problems is how to define the relationship of the reader to the problem. By moral agency, we use this term to refer to a whole field of choices,

⁷⁸ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 158.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

decisions, and actions available within a capable person's horizon. For such a reader, then, how does the text relate to the production of ethical meaning with respect to climate change? Does the text situate the reader culturally, and possibly reorient with respect to critical social issues at the root of ecological problems? Specifically concerning climate change, how does the text stabilize, direct, and sustain ethical attention on real issues afflicting or restoring moral agency? Atypical questions for climate ethicists to ask, these may further sensitize us to the difficult task of reading about climate change and presenting climate change experience. With reference to the case of the *Pachamama* movement, let us consider Jenkins's methodological principle that, if not "cultural transformation," then at least adaptive moral learning, "happens as communities use their moral inheritance to learn from their problems and open new possibilities of cultural action."⁸⁰

To underscore the structural asymmetries of power that specifically implicate political disparities and social location, Willis Jenkins turns to a cross-cultural dialogue with the *Pachamama* movement in an article after *The Future of Ethics*. It occasions further clarification of his conceptual starting point for situated climate ethics in terms of "moral incompetence." "Acknowledging incompetence," he defends, "is one way of specifying what humans need to learn from their changing environment."⁸¹ From a methodological standpoint, insists Jenkins, it provides a stable reference for a problem-focused approach to climate change. His starting point, he admits, is controversial; but he clarifies that it is neither meant as hypocritical in the sense that Christians fail to observe ethical ideals nor as derogatory in the form of an insult. For him, moral incompetence is meant as explanatory

⁸⁰ Jenkins, "Atmospheric Powers," 77.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

and “involves the failure of an entire moral repertory to open ways of confronting a problem.”⁸²

Accommodating the *Pachamama* project, Jenkins makes his position vulnerable to an initiative he considers exemplary. Gathering under the banner of “*Pachamama*,” a Quechuan term native to Bolivia that translates loosely to “Mother Earth,” these advocates of climate justice exhibit the theological creativity upon which prophetic pragmatism depends. Nevertheless, it is also recognized that “pragmatic patience might amount to complicity with fossil-fuel imperialism.”⁸³ Here, Jenkins highlights three lessons of ethical adaption from three strands of their “moral inheritance,” the human rights tradition, indigenous cosmologies, and Christian creation theology. Drawing from each, respectively, the movement exemplifies adaptive moral learning, as they: first, expand the function of human rights in order to encompass an ecological dimension, thereby linking climate change with political violence; second, revise and deploy an indigenous cosmology, under the banner of *Pachamama*, in order to express shared vulnerabilities across various native forms of life; and, third, reclaim Christian creation theology “in ways that overturn the legacies of its use to warrant colonization.”⁸⁴ In sum, by Jenkins’s metric, the *Pachamama* reform project opens possibilities of meaningful agency and making their moral inheritances “less incompetent for addressing climate change.”⁸⁵ Plus, their claims for climate justice challenge those tempted with complacency.

⁸² Ibid., 69.

⁸³ Ibid., 74. For context, both historical and contemporary, see Lois Ann Lorentzen, “Globalization,” in *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Whitney A. Bauman, Richard Bohannon, and Kevin J. O’Brien, 117–36, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017), esp. 129–36.

⁸⁴ Ibid. For a more essayistic treatment, cf. Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 213–5.

⁸⁵ See Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers,” 74–77, cited at 76, 77. See also this movement as sketched in *Future of Ethics*, 112, and 117: “As the indigenous climate justice movement shows, human rights may be deployed to protect the multiplicity of moral worlds from a universalizing dominant culture.”

Let me return to the basic thesis of this chapter that climate change affects ethical bearings, comportment, and perhaps outlook. By acknowledging structural disparities, the *Pachamama* movement enables Jenkins and his readers to locate themselves in terms of social location, power, and privilege. Responding to this intensification of responsibility, Jenkins links a complacency with the unjust privilege of carbon-based economies. Beyond a reform project that exemplifies theological creativity, Jenkins adds, the *Pachamama* as a climate justice movement performs a critical role within this ethical strategy, namely “its critique of northern injustice exerts indispensable pressure on the process.” Whereas Christian projects in North America “will always be tempted toward ventures of action that minimize the peril to their own practices of life,” indigenous theologians challenge complacent habits, invoking a history of genocide that ought to “compel dominant-culture communities to re-consider how their actions participate in the structures of power that organize global relations.”⁸⁶ In this regard, Jenkins argues, “developing shared responsibilities at least requires agents who collaborate across alienating boundaries and develop trust across conflicting accounts of reality.”⁸⁷ If so, then what kind of adaptive moral learning does Jenkins’s basic method achieve?

1.3.3. *Exercising Solidarity*

Throughout his writings, Jenkins stresses the theme of radical inequality. Regarding how climate change produces new dimensions of social injustice, at the outset of *The Future of Ethics*, he expresses this concern, when he remarks: “Humanity’s planetary power does not distribute well among human individuals.”⁸⁸ As a principal theme, it is

⁸⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁸⁷ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 43–5, cited at 45.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3.

unsurprising that for him radical inequality “merits independent consideration” as the fourth dimension of Gardiner’s metaphorical “perfect moral storm,” due to how climate change intensifies inequalities, how this issue corrupts political negotiations and contrasting views of globalization.⁸⁹ For half of the world’s population that owns less than one percent of its wealth, he claims: “How Christian ethics interprets love and justice within the global market thus depends on how it interprets the last century’s experience of economic growth in relation to persistent impoverishment.”⁹⁰ This fundamental concern shapes his climate ethics in a more pronounced manner than most other accounts.

Thinking with Jenkins, perplexed agents may become effectively disposed towards various forms of solidarity that transcend cultural, economic, racial, and other social boundaries. For climate ethics, indeed, other Christian perspectives have developed solidarity explicitly as a basic normative criterion.⁹¹ To be clear, as an ethicist who is not primarily interested in virtue ethic,⁹² Jenkins himself prefers a basic framework that seeks “a more chastened and adaptive form of responsibility, in which humans must manage earth for their own learning and ongoing moral transformation.”⁹³ In particular, as his method of moral reasoning supposes, he aims to stimulate “confessed beliefs” in order to drive innovative actions “that make communities better than they are, then those communities may need help understanding how their beliefs can support new patterns of action.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the pragmatic bent of his ethical thinking and its reliance on reform

⁸⁹ Ibid., 43–5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 235.

⁹¹ See, e.g., James Martin-Schramm, *Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy, and Public Policy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

⁹² Virtue may usefully theorize both the basis and horizon for Jenkins’s attitude of cautious optimism that typifies his theological anthropology. This will be taken up in chapter 4.

⁹³ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 11. He falls comfortably within Dale Jamieson’s “intervention-responsibility” model in “Responsibility and Climate Change,” 38–9.

⁹⁴ Jenkins, “Doing Theological Ethics with Incompetent Christians,” 64.

projects as exemplary lends a certain congruency with virtue ethics. Due to his priority for “radical inequality,” he actively courts solidarity with the poor, oppressed, marginalized, and most vulnerable. In this sense, from a Catholic viewpoint, he anticipates a major moral point that Pope Francis encapsulates when he claims that “the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters” (*Ls*’, sec. 158).

To say more about solidarity as specifically fostered in Jenkins’s strategy, it might be illuminative to invoke a liberationist key. Wary of how poverty is either subject to pietistic exaltation or depersonalized from its objectively scandalous nature, the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez distinguishes three forms or meanings of poverty that are relevant for Christian theological reflection. There is, on the one hand, real poverty that conveys a lack of material conditions that is necessary for human dignity. The poor are especially subjected as victims to these subhuman conditions. On the other hand, spiritual poverty entails “an interior attitude of unattachment to the goods of the world.”

Transformed, these biblical notions converge to produce a distinctive Christian meaning of poverty as an ethical commitment. In turn, spiritual poverty is better habituated as an “attitude of openness and acceptance towards the will of God.” As Gutiérrez writes, it is “to be assumed by all Christians, which expresses itself in solidarity with the poor and in protest against poverty. Jesus assumes the sins of humanity in this way, both out of love for the sinner and in rejection of sin.”⁹⁵ Accordingly, the true meaning of poverty

⁹⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology,” trans. Judith Condor in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26 (19–38); also, idem, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (1973; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 67–8, and also “Poverty: Solidarity and Protest,” 162–73.

acknowledges interconnections especially with the marginalized and exercises an empathic disposition in a Christ-like manner. As a virtue, it may also shed light on specific ways of thinking, feeling, and potentially acting suitable for pursuing the virtue of solidarity in the sphere of climate ethics.

Advancing climate ethics in terms of virtue might start with fostering a certain sense of solidarity as a basis for climate justice. For example, in listening to and amplifying the concerns of the *Pachamama* movement, Willis Jenkins brings climate ethics to the threshold of solidarity in the sense Gutiérrez expresses. After dialogue, the challenge of *Pachamama* advocates, whom themselves are a network of solidarity, place various demands on Jenkins's own position. "When a white US ethicist working in a Global North institution emphasizes how climate change overwhelms meaningful response," Jenkins confesses, "he might be concealing structural violence."⁹⁶

Cultivating that awareness may also illuminate the entanglement of everyday practices in contexts of the Global North with the worsening conditions that threaten the survival of the *Pachamama* movement. As a critical lens, solidarity helps name these structural and systemic conditions that permit such social injustices. It underlines the basic fact of interdependence. In opposition to "the current hegemony of neoliberal market capitalism," Jenkins suggests that solidarity becomes an intellectual virtue that confronts, contests, and "increasingly encounters an entangled idolatry of nation and market."⁹⁷

Relatedly, learning virtues is a process that is not only about characteristics. Any endeavor toward justice in this key also turns on developing certain habits of *feeling* in terms of solidarity. As this example of the *Pachamama* movement may underscore, such

⁹⁶ Jenkins, "Atmospheric Powers," 67.

⁹⁷ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 238. Emphasis is mine.

encounters and accounts open possibilities for new forms of interconnection. These new forms of solidarity depend on empathy. For example, acknowledging the cognitive and moral struggle that is shared—even if silently—with respect to climate change, Jenkins’s basic starting-point registers a particular emotion of being overwhelmed. It may also take the perspectives of others who suffer quietly the turmoil that accompanies encountering the impact of climate change as a basic reality. Empathy not only facilitates; it also may deepen solidarity as it enables attentiveness to the suffering, concerns, and protests of others. Promoting the common good, Moreover, solidarity emerges after coming to know about the concrete struggles and injustices that people suffer and necessarily confront. Giving witness to these struggles is not the same as witnessing the struggle directly. In the end, ethical adaptation to climate change may anticipate the suffering of silenced others, whether movements such as the *Pachamama*, future generations, or non-human species.

Finally, thinking in terms of solidarity emphasizes learning virtues through a focus on embodied practices. To be in solidarity, one must practice solidarity. As Gutiérrez expresses for Christians, the first real sign of poverty is actual solidarity and protest poverty. A principled focus on reform projects might condition the intellectual and affective dimensions of solidarity. When climate ethics is at risk at attenuating the political power of the ethical voices from Latin America, subsequent efforts in solidarity undertake the sort of risk and confrontation necessary. Decisively, in turn, such an ethicist might begin practicing solidarity by way of recognizing their witness, joining their protest, and amplifying their voices to a new public. Meanwhile, while such a reform project demonstrates how they transcend their own moral incompetence, the challenge of solidarity confronts agents in the Global North to overcome their own. To this end, it recognizes that

the fullest potential of human flourishing basically involves ecological flourishing and hinges upon the flourishing of the most vulnerable.

The principal question that Jenkins means to ask is: “Can we sustain the practices that teach and transform us?”⁹⁸ Aware of limits to his ethical strategy of prophetic pragmatism, as he nears the end of *The Future of Ethics* Jenkins poignantly transitions into a different sort of context. Here, he brings climate ethics into a Christian liturgical scene to address concretely the tension between intra- and intergenerational solidarity. Proposing specific reforms to configuring liturgical space, he suggests Christian liturgical practice can “more fully incorporate solidarity with the poor” and through the cosmic liturgy of the ancient church perform “cocreative celebration with all earth.”⁹⁹ If so conceived, liturgy may become fertile ground for climate ethics, addressing ecological illiteracy and social vulnerabilities in Christian communities.¹⁰⁰ For Christians, when words for expressing the reality of climate change fail, fusing these two elements into the Eucharistic practice might express a depth of communal commitment.

We started this chapter with the *Bygdabyingar* and the *chauras*, reflecting on the political dimension of the emotions. As Kari Norgaard’s ethnography of implicit denial portrays, this is typified by a self-censorship that polices emotions and utterances for the sake of preserving the social order. It involves conflicted notions of accountability and yet helplessness, as well as a palpable sense of existential insecurity. In an emblematic way,

⁹⁸ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 13.

⁹⁹ Ibid., esp. 311–6, cited at 312. Jenkins refers to Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: The Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: St. Ignatius Press, 1988), 5:152–80, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s evolutionary Christology in *Le phenomene humain* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1955), and develops Moltmann’s political theology of the cross in *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the relation of liturgy and moral formation, Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 308: “The act of liturgy is itself a transgenerational ethic, performing the communion of saints with inherited forms of interruption and anticipation” (311).

as Norgaard observes, this Norwegian milieu might describe trends and scenes that are characteristic of the United States, whether in classrooms or elsewhere. For such agents, the ethical silence and sense of profound suffering in isolation may be addressed through exercising new forms of solidarity. Assuming concerned and basically informed readers have an innate capacity for expressing and practicing solidarity, the strategy of prophetic pragmatism potentially lends a platform for cultivating virtue, particularly in terms of justice. The affective register of solidarity, moreover, may be key. As a particular way of feeling, solidarity amplifies an inclination into the human condition that suffers in the neglected shadows of climate change experience.

It is a striking fact, however, that Willis Jenkins, particularly in *The Future of Ethics*, seems to avoid both any non-Christian reform projects and fails to engage any theological interlocutors of non-Christian backgrounds. In a sense, this neglect of religious difference is out of character of the more ecumenical character of the “pluralist” exchanges his scholarship and ethical strategy aims to foster.¹⁰¹ Despite concern for “moral pluralism,” his only mention of religious difference is oblique. At the outset, he writes:

Conducting the project this way invites participants in other moral traditions to undertake similar work. Letting Christian ethics *host* the interdisciplinary dialogues in this book does not mean to imply the centrality of Christianity; it rather uses its predicament and potential *as an example* of the sort of religious and moral transformation needed within many traditions.¹⁰²

While others may take Jenkins’s gesture as an inclusive sign of respect, it fails to take seriously the need to engage the contributions, insights, and theological creativity beyond

¹⁰¹ James Keenan evaluates Jenkins’s “facility” with different traditions as “extraordinary”; see “Prophetic Pragmatism and Descending into Matters of Detail,” *TS* 79, no. 1 (2018): 129 (128–45); some of Jenkins’s ecumenical and extra-Christian explorations are provided (n11–13). In this context of Muslim-Christian comparative theology, I must note Jenkins’s “borrowing” from Islamic jurisprudence (*Future of Ethics*, fn68).

¹⁰² Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 7. Emphasis added.

the religious boundaries of Christian churches. How, in the service of climate ethics, should religious difference be engaged? The decisive difference, I think, depends on how we understand hospitality should be practiced.¹⁰³ While aligning in solidarity particularly with Muslim responses to climate change, according to a comparative theological approach, the next chapter shall attempt to further establish the groundwork for cultivating virtues.

1.4. Conclusion

Introducing a virtue approach to climate ethics, neither interested in geopolitical quagmires nor fixated narrowly on explicit denialism, this chapter attempts to offer special focus toward the practical challenge of building solidarity. Context-sensitive, this inquiry aims to prioritize the problem of radical inequality and take seriously what Kari Marie Norgaard identifies as the “political dimension of the emotions.” Virtue epistemology matters because as an ethical framework it is primarily concerned with persons as agents, is interested in addressing quotidian issues, and provides various ways to engage climate change as an ethical challenge. Surveying basic reasons for doing virtue ethics, the affective challenge is engaged with the more comprehensive reasons that the development of virtue ethics can offer. Climate change reveals dramatically how interdependent material circumstances and narratives are. Whereas this chapter attempts to relate the material problems and concrete particularities with which climate ethics must contend, in the next chapter, we shall endeavor according to comparative theological exercise to engage the adaptive keys and narrative of conversion, change, and transformative that virtue ethics provides as a more promising basis for collective action.

¹⁰³ See Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

Toward Ecological Conversion in Virtue Keys: Climate Crisis, Comparative Theology, and the Challenge of Religious Others

In the service of climate ethics, from a Catholic standpoint, this chapter basically aims to illustrate and demonstrate a different understanding of hospitality. It brings together Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* (*Ls'*) and the "Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change" (IDGCC), another landmark statement, that coincided with the anticipation of the COP21 meeting that resulted in the "Paris Agreement." For present purposes, the chapter promotes the necessity of dialogue, while proposing a supplementary role for the discipline of comparative theology to specifically address the basic sense of powerlessness in the face of climate change. By practicing hospitality, the comparative focus of this exercise concerns their development of a virtue framework. According to this framework, it reads these landmark statements according to three distinct but interrelated virtue questions: "Who are we?" "How do we enable ourselves?" "How do we best respond to meet new and upcoming ecological conditions?" In this vein, as a matter of Muslim-Christian comparative theology, the subsequent focus and purpose is outlined in terms of virtue cultivation and reasoning about the common good.

2.0. *Climate Vulnerabilities, Political Entrapment, and "Our Bodies of Broken Bones"*

In 2015, Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* (*Ls'*) invited all humanity to "enter into dialogue" on "our common home" (no. 3), while articulating a "call to ecological conversion."¹ Coinciding with the upcoming COP21, two months later in 2015, a group of six Muslim scholars authors offered a similar resolution in the "Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change" (IDGCC). Reaffirming their religious commitments, in light of climate change, they proclaim: "Intelligence and conscience should lead us, as our faith commands, to treat all things with care and awe (*taqwa*) of their Creator, compassion

¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Hereafter *Ls'*]. The latter point Pope Francis submits in *Evangelii Gaudium*, sec. 231–33, and is reiterated in *Ls'*, sec. 110.

(*rahmah*), and utmost good (*ihsan*).” (2.6).² Drawing together these two theological approaches, from a Catholic standpoint, I shall structure this reflection according to the distinct but interrelated virtue questions: “Who are we?” “How do we enable ourselves?” “How do we best respond to meet new and projected ecological conditions?”³ In the service of climate ethics, this unifying strategy aims to motivate virtue responses and further establish the usefulness that virtue frameworks afford.

More than five years after their promulgation, however, it seems sadly but undeniably true that the world has not embraced this call of justice. to turn compassionately toward the suffering of the earth as one of its poor, nor to the disproportionate suffering of the poor themselves because of climate change. In addition, more five years after the encyclical, Catholic reception of Pope Francis’s call for ecological conversion has insufficiently embraced the necessity and benefits of dialogue. As a result, serious attention is lacking toward deeper ethical challenges that threaten to dampen the call of justice and impair the pursuit of ecological conversion.

The decisive difference depends, I think, on how we practice hospitality and the key conception of respect that is enact. In *The Future of Ethics*, after he claims the deeper challenges concern the complicating “condition of moral pluralism and cultural conflict,”

² Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change,” International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, 18 August 2015, accessible online at <https://www.ifees.org.uk/about/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/> (accessed on November 1, 2018) [Hereafter IDGCC]. The authorship of IDGCC is accredited to a drafting committee of six members, whose expertise ranges from accreditation in Islamic sciences to environmental ethics: Fazlun Khalid, Fachruddin Mangunjaya, Othman Llewellyn, Azizan Baharuddin, Ibrahim Ozdemir, Abdelmajid Tribak. The IDGCC was the culmination of the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium in Istanbul that included scholars and representatives from numerous civil society organizations and predominantly Muslim nations.

³ Based on the framework in Allen Thompson and Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, eds., *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change: Human Virtues of the Future* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), cited at 7. This virtue framework loosely fits the development of virtue frameworks in Catholic theological ethics; see “Introducing Climate Ethics and Comparative Theology,” p. xxv.

Willis Jenkins acknowledges the presence of religious others. Attempting to accommodate this diversity, he articulates a “principle of hospitality,” but never engages non-Christian responses to climate change. Like Jenkins’s ethical strategy, the Catholic reception of the encyclical reflects parochial habits that hinder virtue responses. Simply put, no religion alone is equal to the task. However, comparative endeavors remain “surprisingly sparse,” with no examples that specifically address the issue of climate change.⁴ More receptively, the call of justice demands that the pursuit of ecological conversion neither exclude nor denigrate necessary conditions for the pursuit of human fulfillment. Therefore, the discipline of comparative theology must fulfill this important function. For climate ethics, governed by justice, this chapter shall execute a key shift by approaching justice in terms of cultivating virtue and reasoning about the common good.

and arrest developing concerns for the common good.

At the outset of the encyclical, Pope Francis engages with one of his predecessors Pope John XXIII, who rejected war and made a proposal for peace “with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis” (sec. 3). Caught up in that moment, “on the verge of the cosmic inhumanity of atomic war,” Thomas Merton perceived the crisis basically as a choice between love and hate.⁵ From his monastic cell, as a Christian, Merton communicated to his readers the widespread failure to discover in humanity the “One Mystical Christ, in Whom we all complete one another.” Confronted with division and conflict, he laments, writing: “Christ suffers dismemberment.” In his view, habitually,

⁴ See Hyo-Dong Lee, *Spirit, Qi, and the Multitude: A Comparative Theology for the Democracy of Creation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), and Daniel P. Scheid, *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Both are “pre-ethical, and neither engage “concrete particularities” nor actual communities of lived practice. The specific issue of climate change is barely thematized.

⁵ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1972), esp. 72–4.

hatred “recoils from the sacrifice and the sorrow that are the price of resetting the bones.” However, at its core, this ethical challenge requires commitments that are derived from love, which should not be mistaken as some choice that is absent of suffering. Rather, to the contrary, Merton reflects insights into love that bestows a radical willingness to connect with others and to accept “suffering by our very contact with one another.” Thus, whereas hatred refuses this reunion, Merton understands the ethical task of this painful love concerns “the resetting of a Body of broken bones.”

2.0.1. *Context: Climate Vulnerabilities, Dynamics of Political Entrapment, Adaptation*

For climate ethics, in this spirit, such commitments yield not a naïve approach to the challenge of religious difference and questions of the good life, but a defense of virtues as common goods and a dialogical line of approach that might foster a sense of shared accountability for the root causes of anthropogenic climate change. By practicing hospitality, in this chapter, such a dialogical approach can become open and receptive to basic needs, and climate vulnerabilities. Acts of hospitality, in solidarity, might come to recognize the harmful effects upon the poor and most vulnerable. Furthermore, by way of dialogue, learning virtues begins to address the prevailing sense of political powerlessness and to emphasize human capabilities. In response to climate change, virtue keys provide a more robust engagement in the pursuit of ecological conversion. In dialogue, virtue ethics refocuses the ethical challenge in terms of how we can support and generate commitments to the common good, building solidarity and supporting a sound basis for climate justice.

In the service of climate ethics, however, virtue ethics can help sensitize reflection to the continually destabilizing circumstances. In the case of Bygdaby, typically, Kari Marie Norgaard observes these captive dispositions in her book *Living in Denial* (cited in

the first chapter), describing the political impact beyond confusion and guilt. For the villagers of this town, collectively, a feeling of entrapment is closely related to the disorientation that the climate crisis usually imposes. This sense underpins much of the silence and inaction. For instance, hypothetically, if national and corporate interests were to commit to radical reforms as one resident bemoans, climate change is still a foregone conclusion. Norgaard reports:

Even if all of this change were to be achieved, all the carbon dioxide released up to the present will still continue to cause climate change. Thus, it is not surprising that rather than feeling that there is much that can be done, one resident, Maghild, a woman in her late sixties, pronounced that “we must take it as it comes.” And Lene told me, “And of course it’s climate change that is doing it. There isn’t anything to be done about it.” Beyond the dimension of powerlessness that comes from the situation itself but connected to the dimension is the possibility that those political and economic structures that have been set in place are inadequate to handle the problem. ... Arne said that he was afraid that there was less optimism than before, and Peter felt that people have the sense that “no, there’s no point. It doesn’t matter.”⁶

Regarding the Bygdaby case, Kari Marie Norgaard observes that the villagers are generally vulnerable to varying levels of fear, particular in the “loss of ontological security,” guilt, and anxiety. Comparatively, in the institutional settings of her American classroom, she also notices these powerful emotions that tend to consummate in the prevailing sense helplessness in the face of climate change. These “entrapped” dispositions provide necessary context for addressing virtues in light of climate change.

In response to climate change, vulnerabilities differ according to the cultural context. From a planetary perspective, Swedish scientist Johan Rockström (and over two-dozen collaborators) identifies nine planetary “boundaries.” Each boundary shows specific

⁶ Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Denial* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), esp. 83–5, cited at 84.

ways human agency cumulatively is transgressing materials limits of the earth itself.⁷ From an African viewpoint, in this light, Jesuit theologian Peter Knox highlights different vulnerabilities in the face of climate change, writing that the crisis reveals the earth itself as a “vulnerable, limited system, with a precarious ability to sustain human life.” Moreover, considering the violation of planetary boundaries, he witnesses that as a result some peoples bear disproportionately the burden of climate impacts. For Knox, in short, radical inequality contextualizes the issue of climate change. Often small-scale African farmers lack “resilience” in the form of resources, communal support, and so their recovery from climate-altered conditions is handicapped. In this context, Knox wonders, how is it possible to balance need for greater food production that would serve a growing population while satisfying increased economic prosperity and material ambitions, that is, the expectations of “emerging markets”? Thus, given the urgency, the key task that Knox discerns in his context is specifically epistemological, namely: “how to explain to people in Africa, with their understandable aspirations for comfort and convenience, that these are potentially harmful to the planet and to the common good.”⁸

Based on solidarity, justice requires us to notice disproportionate suffering of the most vulnerable. In the Philippines, during the wake of the 2013 super-typhoon Haiyan, Catholic ethicist Agnes Brazal witnessed many survivors who encountered an “unexpected wilderness” as a storm surge claimed lives of inhabitants from many coastal cities, such as

⁷ See Johan Rockström et al., “Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity,” *Ecology and Society* 14, no. 2 (2009): 32, <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32> (accessed 21 August 2019).

⁸ Peter Knox, “Planetary Boundaries: Africa’s Vulnerabilities and Resilience,” in *Fragile World: Ecology and the Church*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh, 112–25 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), cited at 122. Of the nine boundaries, Knox identifies several in *Ls*’, specifically climate change (sec. 23-6), biosphere integrity (sec. 32-42), freshwater use (sec. 27-31), land-system change (sec. 39, 41), ozone depletion (sec. 168), and ocean acidification (sec. 24). The encyclical addresses neither novel entities (e.g., radioactivity) nor biogeochemical flows.

Tacloban. For them, she says, it seemed either the “wilderness suddenly [were] encroaching upon our existence” or, in a different sense, “nature taking back its own.” One community organizer named José tells her: “At the moment, I am angry at the sea; I do not want to take a dip. I used to play in the sea when the tide was high. Now when I look at the sea, I remember the people it has taken.”⁹ Meanwhile, because of the super-typhoon, a group of women—all mothers and all widowed—must deal with sudden loss of their husbands due to the storm surge, while providing sustenance for their children. Echoing Pope Francis’s idea of “debt,” contextually, Brazal reflects the basic injustice of this situation, writing: “The countries that are most resilient to the impact of climate change are those that historically emitted the most carbon dioxide into the earth’s atmosphere, while those who contributed the least greenhouse gases are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.”

In response to climate change, these vulnerabilities must be seriously taken into account. In the Bygdaby case, Kari Marie Norgaard identifies entrapped dispositions that tend to express a consummate sense of powerlessness. By practicing hospitality, it is possible to address these emotional tendencies and habitual dispositions that tend to hamper virtue responses. More receptive and responsive to these climate vulnerabilities, the concerns of the poor can be prioritized. The ethical realities of climate change, unsettling at best, affect the most vulnerable in destabilizing and perilous ways. Whereas many frameworks focus on policies, cost-benefit analyses, principles, a virtue approach enables greater moral engagement, inviting persons as moral agents to name activities that

⁹ Agnes M. Brazal, “Resilience: Virtue in the Unexpected Wilderness,” in *An Unexpected Wilderness: Christianity and the Natural World*, ed. Colleen Mary Carpenter, 49–68 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), cited at 51, 62.

contribute to injustices and clarify those habits, exemplars, practices, and narratives that support human capabilities and the pursuit of human fulfillment. To this end, solidarity can offer a sound basis for an intense and a fruitful dialogue that is directed toward more hospitable encounters.

2.0.2. *Reconfiguring Solidarity: How and Why Dialogue Matters in Climate Ethics*

The encyclical's dialogical commitment might engender its reception beyond the Catholic Church. For the respected philosopher Dale Jamieson, a leading figure in climate ethics, the encyclical represents "the first really important environmental text of the twenty-first century."¹⁰ Regarding the encyclical's most important contribution, anthropologists Swayam Bagaria and Naveeda Khan remark the text itself lends the "means for us to cross scales to be able to *implicate* individual lives and actions within a phenomenon that has largely been perceived as a scientific construction, distant, abstract, and far in the future."¹¹ For another reader outside of the Catholic Church, the famous novelist Amitav Ghosh the encyclical seems to succeed precisely "where climate change resists contemporary literature and the arts," and he take the text as a "sign of hope" because—among several reasons—religious perspectives are "not subject to the limitations that have made climate change such a challenge for our existing institutions of governance: they transcend nation-states, and they all acknowledge intergenerational, long-term responsibilities."¹²

Regarding the encyclical, similarly, the Muslim scholar Anas Malik comments that "the document resounds with a positive ethic of compassion, justice, and transformation,

¹⁰ Dale Jamieson, "Why *Laudato si'* Matters," *Environment: Society and Policy for Sustainable Development* 57, no. 6 (2015): 19–20.

¹¹ Swayam Bagaria and Naveeda Khan, "Teaching Climate Change Otherwise," in *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*, eds. Stephen Siperstein et al. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 170.

¹² Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), cited 151, 159.

and Muslims should consider it carefully.”¹³ In general, as Christopher Chapple observes, the text is “being studied not exclusively by Roman Catholics but has received wide attention from Christians of all denominations and has sparked parallel documents issued by Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists.”¹⁴ In the summer of 2015, other religious communities all voiced their profound concerns about the issues of climate change, and the need for greater commitment.¹⁵ Now, however, addressing the general state of powerlessness and the need for resolution, the crucial questions are practical: How is it possible to reason about justice? Building solidarity, what kind of an ethical approach can foster these connections and build networks of respect?

In the IDGCC, readers will notice an appeal to greater moral engagement across religious differences. Only two months after the encyclical’s publication, the Muslim authors recognized the “contributions of other faiths,” and encouraged the political hope of dialogue from a particularly Quranic basic. To be clear, their theological affirmation of dialogue neither carries the authoritative weight of the Muslim consensus, nor does it suppose the global religion offers a monolithic response. Nevertheless, from a Muslim standpoint, Anas Malik argues that “A Common Word” initiative does provide “the most authoritative Muslim effort to reach out to the world’s Christians on the basis of the Quran (3:64).” The clear virtue framework can elucidate the virtue keys that Pope Francis presents in the pursuit of ecological conversion. For the sake of peace and justice, furthermore, they invite Christians to cooperate with Muslims and affirm common goods.

¹³ Anas Malik, “Toward Muslim Action on the Ecological Crisis,” *Islamic Horizons* 53, no. 6 (2015): 29.

¹⁴ Christopher Key Chapple, “Lynn White Jr. and India: Romance? Reality?” in *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The ‘Lynn White Thesis’ at Fifty*, ed. Todd LeVasseur and Whitney Bauman (New York: Routledge, 2017), 116.

¹⁵ For statements on climate change from these other theological perspectives, see Buddhist, Hindu. For a more comprehensive table of religious environmental declaration in 2015, cf. Jaime Tatay, S.J., and Catherine Devitt, “Sustainability and Interreligious Dialogue,” *Islamochristiana* 43 (2017): 130, Table 1 (123–39)

In response to climate change, these critical aims should also address root causes of anthropogenic climate change. Differences in perspective, moreover, can shed light on the intrinsically complex nature of climate change. From a comparative theological perspective, in this vein, Catholic systematician Klaus von Stosch identifies ecology as a “pan-human problem beyond the range of any one or even two religions to solve.” Whereas religious attitudes may dispose practitioners to find the “weakness” of another religion, in contrast, he proposes the comparative “aim should rather be to solve problems together and to encourage people to solve them.”¹⁶ In the service of climate ethics, this comparative aim might also strive to affirm the necessity and benefits of dialogue. “True wisdom,” according to Pope Francis, is “the fruit of self-examination, dialogue, and generous encounter between persons” (*Ls*’, 47). Developing a mutual basis of respect and practicing hospitality to the distinct gifts of others, dialogue can address root causes, concrete particularities, and may foster shared accountability. In this manner, an approach to justice becomes possible in terms of cultivating virtue and reasoning about the common good.

2.1. *Who Are We? Planetary Disfigurement and Ethical Horizons*

What does flourishing mean in the face of climate change? Is virtue ethics capable of addressing root anthropogenic causes? Before turning to the pertinent hermeneutic of virtue ethics,¹⁷ with special focus toward character, exemplars, habituation, and communal narratives, we must develop the pre-requisite awareness that implicates ways of life, habits of being, and human activities within the issue of climate change. In this vein, although the

¹⁶ Klaus von Stosch, “Comparative Theology as Liberal and Confessional Theology,” *Religions* 3, no. 4 (2012): 983–92, cited at 988.

¹⁷ For these “extensive dimensions” of virtue ethics, see Lúcas Chan, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), esp. 85–92; also, idem, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012).

circumstances are unprecedented, virtue ethics can impart the kind of self-examination that sets the basis for what Pope Francis calls “ecological conversion.” Moreover, when read in tandem, these two theological approaches offer some structural parallels. For example, both texts guide readers through an ethical method of “see, judge, act” that can inform and shape their own perspectives of the planetary situation. Who are we becoming in the role of humanity or through relations of anthropogenic climate change? After gathering a clearer perspective on the scientific consensus, the act of giving witness to the state of planetary disfigurement may be generative. It might renew a sense of adaptive capabilities and replenish commitments to the greater common good.

Both approaches exhibit ways of naming climate change as a collective problem, not an individual burden. In *Ls*’, commencing his account of the planetary situation, Pope Francis asserts, “climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all” (sec. 23). By collectivizing responsibility for climate change widely and inclusively, as a matter of conscience, the Muslim authors of the IDGCC present an urgent choice in response to the ongoing crisis. As such, they enable us to examine in complementary ways the prevailing norms that distort how we should understand flourishing.

For Pope Francis, as discussed last chapter, there are two overlapping crises, climate change and the scandal of poverty. Accounting for those at the margins, Pope Francis targets norms of “flourishing” for critical questioning in light of the ecological crisis. Furthermore, Pope Francis teaches: “we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach” (sec. 49). In *Ls*’, while the Earth is identified as one of the poor, he attempts to see this plight in tandem with the ongoing scandal of poverty. While readers consider how “planetary boundaries” are being transgressed, Pope

Francis stresses the disproportionate impact on the poor. Therefore, Pope Francis's virtue argument is not primarily eudaimonistic. More modestly, he demonstrates how it is possible to employ a virtue hermeneutic with primary concern for "quality of life" as a minimum—and yet still universal—standard.

As readers contemplate the earth and its disfigured state, it is possible to imagine thriving biospheres as a significant condition of "flourishing." From a theological viewpoint, as the Muslim authors witness, climate and more broadly the earth itself should be identified as a "gift." Instead of depicting reality with humanity centered at the heart of the universe, the declaration starts by reflecting on God's creation. The divine act of creation itself, as they note, definitively bestows what flourishing means in terms of the universe's "diversity, richness and vitality," as they recognize this in those cosmic, divine "signs" that are typically highlighted in Quranic verses such as the stars, sun, moon, "earth and all of its communities of living beings." Thus, creation in both the aggregate and in its particularities, they point out, "reflect and manifest boundless glory and mercy of their Creator." Lending some insight into what flourishing means, these signs accordingly from an Islamic perspective "serve and glorify their Maker," and "bow to their Lord's will," a statement that echoes the more comprehensive view of the earth as community of God's creation that readers find in the second section of the IDGCC. To begin, thus, the Muslim authors issue more than a note of praise, instead by explicating this scriptural foundation, they establish that humans as a species belong to and are entrusted with a particular role in God's community of creation. Within that widened framework, they approach flourishing within the enabling ecological conditions that make human flourishing possible on Earth.

This theocentric foundation informs subsequent assessment of the planetary situation, especially the anthropogenic roots of the current global warming. While speaking geologically, these Muslim authors extend their prior reflection on flourishing to properly situate a critical theological insight and appropriate urgency for ethical adaptation. First, the pace of climate change is of a wholly different order. Whereas in previous epochs climate went through different phases “such that forms and communities of life have adjusted accordingly,” they acknowledge that in this moment the pace of change is unprecedented. Second, as is often apparent in the merciful gifts of God’s creation, catastrophe may occasion a paradoxical happening. Insofar as past climate change paved the way for “flowering anew,” humanity currently benefits from the “emergence of balanced ecosystems such as those we treasure today.” Although climate change is not entirely without precedent, third, a key difference regarding the current crisis is its anthropogenic nature. Introducing a note of bitter irony, they write:

Climate change in the past was also instrumental in laying down immense stores of fossil fuels from which we derive benefits today. Ironically, our unwise and short-sighted use of these resources is now resulting in the destruction of the very conditions that have made our life on Earth possible.
(1.2)

In this key, according to their Islamic approach, the anthropogenic disruption in the “balance” (*mīzān*) of God’s creation presents an ironic and a tragic development of human agency. In the next statement, “human-induced” is the judgment proffered succinctly: “we have now become a force dominating nature” (1.3), instead of a “caretaker” (*khalīfah*). In consideration of this Islamic viewpoint, readers can maintain focus on the character of

humanity as a species, instead of narrowly confined toward personal goods that virtuous character instills.¹⁸

By way of dialogue, a comparative theological approach should also underscore common ground, and distinct emphases that elucidate different facets of these complex problems. Beyond the encyclical's original framing of the climate crisis, wherein Pope Francis relates to Earth as "mother" and "sister," it is possible for readers to locate a theocentric viewpoint of creation that, from a Christian perspective, "can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all" (sec. 76). Although judged in light of a biblical perspective, the encyclical analogously attempts to rectify "anthropocentric" views of the universe that ignore the basic truth that is everything is interconnected. Thus, this religious language suggests limitations of "nature," a term commonly used to speak more of separations than relations. Instead of nature understood as a "system which can be studied, understood and controlled," he proposes the "gift" quality of creation, which is "a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion" (sec. 76). In an emphatic sense, the Muslim perspective can also remind Christians that creation is intrinsically and potentially revelatory. In an analogous key, Pope Francis calls on Christians to appreciate the sacramental character of various "signs." From the outset, beholding the Earth as the effect of a divine act of gratuitous love, the Muslim authors reflect that various "gifts," such as "a functioning climate, healthy air to breathe, regular seasons and living oceans" (1.3), are manifestations of "the boundless glory and mercy of God" (1.1).

¹⁸ For this critical point, distinguishing virtue approaches according to the "ecological" and "individual" register, see Jenkins, "Turn to Virtue," 77. In chapter 4, this dissertation shall introduce how virtue ethics can moderate this "double register of moral agency," mediating the personal and ecological poles.

In contrast, the 2015 Paris Agreement offers a clear example of how neo-liberal assumptions work, actively avoiding ethical consideration of core issues concerning the climate crisis. According to Amitav Ghosh, compared to *Ls*’, the Paris document casts climate change in an entirely different light without the “slightest acknowledgement that something has gone wrong with our dominant paradigms.”¹⁹ Neither conveying any sense of disruption nor duly appreciating the urgency of the crisis, the view of adaptation is more narrowly summarized as mitigation that seeks to “buffer economic development.”²⁰ For Ghosh at least, in this final document, it has become clear that what is centrally at stake is its normative commitment: “The current paradigm of perpetual growth is enshrined at the core of the text.” In the Paris Agreement, Ghosh notes that there is no clear plan of mitigation; its premises are based on a “remote possibility” of technological innovation that would “whisk greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and bury them deep underground.” For Ghosh, this basis “is little less than an act of faith, not unlike religious belief.”²¹ In stark contrast, however, he urges readers to appreciate a total avoidance of “miraculous interventions” in the encyclical, as poverty and justice “keep close company.” In summation, Ghosh notes: “The differences between the two texts is never clearer than in the manner of their endings.” As the Paris Agreement closes, he critiques: “The very syntax is an expression of faith in the sovereignty of Man and his ability to shape the future.” By contrast, in the encyclical, readers find “an appeal for help and guidance” particularly in two concluding prayers.²²

¹⁹ Ghosh, *Great Derangement*, 154.

²⁰ For critical distinctions of adaptive responses, see Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, 6-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²² *Ibid.*, 158.

When it comes to climate change, Pope Francis warns, honest dialogue is impossible at the expense of those who suffer disproportionately. Furthermore, he names “abandonment of the poor” a social sin. Given the climate crisis, revealingly, “sin” according to Pope Francis takes various forms, including “attacks on nature” (no. 66). For this theological lesson for Catholic social teaching, he accredits Patriarch Bartholomew, whose insights are “challenging us to acknowledge our sins against creation” (sec. 8).²³

2.1.2. *Problems with “Sin”: Roots Causes and Cultural Habits*

In kind, the virtue approach to justice also shapes the Muslim approach in the IDGCC, while focusing on ethical shortcomings—intentional or not—that define the current state of the crisis. Not every reader would find religious voices in the climate discourse a welcomed addition. For example, such a critic is historian Clare Monagle, who considers its concept of sin especially problematic. Whereas Pope Francis’s vision of dialogue, as well as that of his Muslim interlocutors is eschatological, and oriented toward otherness, other critics may regard communicative action as needing to exact a “negotiated consensus.” As such, Monagle objects, the concept of sin makes “failing ontological,” thereby absolutizing a political reality in religious terms. Also, she supposes, sin “does not lend itself to an inclusive and negotiated political [community].” Moreover, she suspects, Pope Francis’s “ecological conversion” is toward “Christ that centers nature at its core,” and not “the climate cause.”²⁴ Monagle’s concern is not exceptional. Climate ethicist Byron

²³ See John Chryssavgis, eds., *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Visions and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), esp. 95–100 and 199–204, cf. *Ls’* fn15. See also John Chryssavgis, eds., *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of Green Patriarch Bartholomew*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009).

²⁴ Clare Monagle, “The Politics of Extra/ordinary Time: Encyclical Thinking,” *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 4 (2017): 1390918, cf. also Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Monagle critiques *Ls’* against the background of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly *Rerum novarum* (1891) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991).

Williston worries, for instance, that confessional stances would interject a view that climate change is “peccatogenetic,” a view that he defines as: “explanations of events that point to their putative origin in human sins.” For Williston, this legitimate concern is grounded in the historical fact that European Christians reacted to the “little Ice Age” with persecutions of witchcraft, and yet the “people in the seventeenth century were catastrophically wrong about both what was causing climate change and what should be done.”²⁵

Neither approach is fair to Pope Francis, nor an accurate reading of “sin” in the encyclical. Still, these critics prompt deeper consideration of how the notion of sin functions in the text. As this reflection aims to briefly show, Pope Francis’s use of sin contextualizes climate crisis in terms of mutual relationality, historicity, and habitual tendencies,²⁶ thus neither absolutizing sin nor reducing climate change to aggregately human sins. From the IDGCC, analogously, readers find an interpretive approach of climate change in terms of “corrupting the earth” (*fasād fī al-‘ard*) that plainly implicates participation in anthropogenic causes.

The IDGCC also provides a critical examination of the implications of climate change through theological concern for justice. Regarding ways technology has become a tool that humanity utilizes for purposes of domination, Pope Francis judges: “Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely” (sec. 104). Similarly, in the IDGCC, their Muslim perspective attends to how the role and power of humanity exposes misuse of gifts, especially energy and fossil fuels. It is well known

²⁵ Byron Williston, *The Anthropocene Project: Virtue in an Age of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. 2–7.

²⁶ For a survey and critique of the Catholic debate about sin, as opposed to “sins,” see Darlene Fozard Weaver, “Taking Sin Seriously,” *JRE* 31, no. 1 (2003): 45–74. For a theological critique of traditional notions of sin that complements the encyclical’s, readers are advised to consider Delores Williams’s essay “Sin, Nature, and Black Women’s Bodies,” in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, ed. Carol J. Adams, 24–9 (New York: Continuum, 1993).

that fossil fuels and particularly oil are a chief cause of climate change, a scientific basis that is widely accepted. In *Ls*, Pope Francis connects the climate crisis with the “intensive use of fossil fuels” (sec. 23). From the Muslim perspective of the IDGCC authors, fossil fuels can rightly be regarded as a particular “gift” bestowed to humanity and even, materially, as a crucial means for the current state of human flourishing. Yet, ironically, they note: “But the same fossil fuels that helped us achieve most of the prosperity we see today are the main cause of climate change” (1.3).

Thus, analogously, the Muslim perspective historicizes “misuse,” particularly because of the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of fossil fuel dependence. They label broadly the ecological crisis and its various manifestations as “corrupting the earth” (*fasād fī al-‘ard*). Despite historical changes in climate that were instrumental in “laying down stores of fossil fuels,” they observe that the contemporary use of these natural resources is “unwise,” “shorted-sighted,” “abusive” and materially destructive. As part of their “urgent” and “radical reappraisal” (1.5), the Arabic term *fasād fī al-‘ard* appears three times, with a Quranic verse that provides a mirror by which to reflect:

Corruption has appeared on land and sea
by what people’s own hands have wrought,
that He may let them taste some consequences of their deeds,
so that they may turn back. (Q 30:41)

To identify climate change as a sign of “corrupting the earth,” in this theological vein, is to observe forthrightly the fact that human beings in general are altering the land, sea, atmosphere for harmfully misguided, if not entirely selfish, purposes. The contrast should not be overlooked between the normative role of humanity and the current reality. With respect to the former, they posit that humanity’s ultimate role is “to work for the greatest good we can for all the species, individuals, and generations of God’s creatures” (1.1).

Regarding the latter, they lament, “we have now become a force dominating nature” (1.3). Still, “with alarm,” they note, “the multi-national scramble now taking place for more fossil fuel deposits under the dissolving ice caps in the arctic regions” (1.6). Thus, the moral point should not be lost when they highlight how human activities reveal undue strain on the earth. Climate change is not simply “corrupting the earth,” but in myriad ways, as the Muslim authors list, becomes revealed in various forms of ecological disfigurement: polluted atmosphere, soil erosion, deforestation, desertification, land-use change, expanding habitats of invasive species, genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

How does theological attention to the ecological crisis in terms of sin highlight several key aspects of climate change? By recognizing sin, first, the encyclical situates reflection with sensitivity to the profoundly “ruptured” state of humanity’s relations. For Pope Francis, the intimate relation between humanity and Earth as “sister” is currently disrupted and, as such, his reflection occurs amidst this fractured state. His use of sin here should not be confused with traditional theological understandings of sin as alienation or estrangement from God. Rather, according to Pope Francis, sin manifests itself concretely through relations, and in this case through “attacks on nature” (sec. 66, cf. 8, 48). After praising Earth as creation, Pope Francis judges at the outset: “The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life” (no. 2). But, as this reading supposes, the realities are not predetermined as inherited from “Adam’s sin,” rather, by contrast, Pope Francis’s use of sin perceives a ruptured state of ecological relations.

Second, bringing to consciousness this relational notion of sin, Pope Francis underscores the basis of interpreting human “attacks on nature” as sin not in abstract

principle, but as mediated historically. In the encyclical, there is no pretense that climate change is the result of divine punishment or genetic transmission of human wickedness. Rather, the encyclical's use of "sin" introduces the historicity of very particular human activities in the past two hundred years. As opposed to a narrowly ontological view of sin, Pope Francis narrates the historical emergence of ecological consciousness in papal magisterial statements. Given this developing concern, I would argue, Pope Francis even implicates the church's own role in the ecological crisis, pointing out: "An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world" (sec. 116). Instead of creating a social dichotomy between those who sin and those who do not, Pope Francis follows Patriarch Bartholomew, in inviting others to each discern how they contribute to climate change.

Finally, and more concretely, Pope Francis's use of "sin" seeks to describe specific social patterns that contribute to climate change. He does so to disrupt these habitual tendencies. In his judgment, naming the "technocratic paradigm" and subsequently describing its tendencies is critical for counteracting climate change. By Pope Francis's view, these technocratic habits claim "lordship over all" (sec. 108). This paradigm, dominating economic and political life, "exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object" (sec. 106). In relation, the subject is determined toward "possession, mastery, and transformation" (sec. 106). In effect, reflects Pope Francis, "technocratic habits" lead to "a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationship between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant" (sec. 110). Originated in "excessive

anthropocentrism,” the technocratic paradigm bears no “acceptance of limits,” obscuring the “truth of the Creator” in favor of the ascendancy of humanity’s power.²⁷

So why bother with “sin”? Might there not be alternative ways in political discourse to describe horrors and evil of the climate crisis? What reasons are there for not catering to modern rationality for the sake of an easier consensus? By recognizing sin, the encyclical implicates and yet also expands ethical reflection. Going beyond simply learning from mistakes, these religious approaches provide lessons for appreciating interconnections. Drawing out relationality, historicity, and the habituated nature of human activities, his use of theological concepts conveys the impression of religious language being deployed as an instrument for shaping consciences. Moreover, we may also notice how *affectively* “sin” works in accord with an important objective of the encyclical, as when Pope Francis explicates: “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but *rather to become painfully aware*, to dare to turn what is happening to the world *into our own personal suffering* and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (sec. 19).²⁸ Similarly, from a Muslim perspective, the issue of climate change clearly raises the need for repentance. For instance, considering the moral contrast, the authors of the IDGCC ask, rhetorically, “How will we face our Creator?” (1.3).

In comparable measures, concerns for injustices govern these two approaches. To a certain degree, these visions of flourishing are mutually intelligible. Although a fundamental concept of the encyclical, the theological term “sin” is neither central nor

²⁷ For an Augustinian reading of the encyclical, see Anna Rowlands, “*Laudato si’*: Re-thinking Politics,” *Political Theology* 16, no. 5 (2015): 418–20.

²⁸ Emphasis my own. In this vein, the encyclical is fruitfully read as a vulnerable account of conscience. As such, Pope Francis expresses contrition for the church’s role in a “Promethean vision of mastery over the world,” and the language of “ecological attacks” conveys an affected conscience.

determinative of its ethical horizon. The Quranic notion of “corrupting the earth,” similarly, draws ethical attention toward root causes of anthropogenic climate change in its historical particularities. For Christians, meanwhile, the IDGCC is alert to the pertinence of character formation for determination of right response—as further specified concisely in their various calls for social action. Furthermore, in this light, readers of the encyclical can refine their understanding of the necessary virtues that dispose us toward ecological conversion.

2.2. “How Do We Enable Ourselves”? Re-engaging Virtue Foundations

Straightforwardly, the IDGCC provides a thoroughly coherent virtue ethic. In contrast and in parallel, this theological approach compared with the perspective of Pope Francis can raise and elucidate the virtue “turn” that the encyclical itself presents. A trajectory of virtue ethics is traceable periodically throughout the encyclical. Pope Francis cites approvingly a theological insight of the Brazilian bishops whose discovery of God’s in-dwelling presence prompts them toward cultivating “ecological virtues” (sec. 88).²⁹ In concluding why Christian spirituality matters, furthermore, Pope Francis offers a virtue-focused proposal: “Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment” (sec. 211). Addressing Christians unequivocally, he emphasizes this point: “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (sec. 217). To this end, the IDGCC approach can help sharpen understanding and promote the right hermeneutics of virtue ethics.

2.2.1. Climate Change and Character

²⁹ National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil, *A Igreja e a Questão Ecológica: Leitura ético-teológica a partir da análise crítica do desenvolvimento* (Sao Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1992), 53–4.

Who should we become? How do we best enable ourselves? This initial question here highlights the significance of adjusting character in response to climate change, whereas the second is more precisely a question of capability to which we will return shortly. Some readers, conceivably, will assume that pursuing virtues in terms of character traits is strictly a personal endeavor or means of self-enrichment. As such, virtue ethics would appear woefully subjective as merely a matter of personal preference or, in a different sense, inappropriately moralistic and limited considering the political scope of climate change. However, as suggested above, this privatized view ought to be fairly critiqued as a radical refutation of a fundamental assumption of virtue ethics, specifically confidence that personal goods are ultimately inseparable from the common good. Therefore, while a robust sense of justice governs both theological perspectives in relation to the common good, the alternative visions they offer outline adaptive virtues. Given the extensive disfigurement of the planet, moreover, such virtue hermeneutics that are drawn from theocentric foundations might foster a new appreciation for humility, thereby counteracting unconscious anthropocentric assumptions. Readers will notice how, in the IDGCC approach, the authors choose to promote an ethic of character that is concentrated according to a portrait of the Prophet Muhammad, shedding light on how Pope Francis depends on virtue language when explicating why Christian spirituality matters for an ethical response to climate change.

Acknowledging human flourishing as inseparable from the ecological conditions that made it possible, the IDGCC authors' approach to climate change admires the balance (*mīzān*) with which God endowed creation, as evident in the "earth's fine equilibrium" (1.3) that human agency is currently jeopardizing. Regarding the planetary balance, they

affirm: “God created the earth in perfect equilibrium” (2.3). It is well known that acquiring a virtue requires locating the mean between two vicious extremes. If climate change makes plain recent planetary imbalances and human excesses, finding the mean or restoring balance becomes a particular goal for virtue thinking. In the end, acting moderately is a prime measure of practical wisdom.

Likewise, after reflecting upon the planetary situation, especially how various signs manifest ways humanity is “corrupting the earth” (*fasād fī al-‘ard*), the Muslim authors proceed to explicate how to respond specifically by adjusting character. As one of the characteristics, they highlight “frugality” (*muqtasid*)³⁰ as a key disposition, especially in opposition to the “relentless pursuit of growth and consumption” (2.5). Frugality, as an antidote of sorts, counteracts habits that can lead to “corruption,” since it basically reflects a disposition that is content with fulfillment of basic needs and respect for material limits. Frugality, materially speaking, represents a specific way of being moderate in contrast to the current paradigm of “well-being.” Generally, humans must squelch feeling that progress is measured solely by market factors. Rather, based on this Muslim criticism, our use of ecological “gifts” should be enacted with moderation, greater longanimity, and respect for their own integrity. Thus, becoming “frugal” extends past a personal moral virtue to clearly take on wider social and ecological implications.

In an aspirational sense, another way to frame that Muslim call to act moderately. As human activities have begun to wreak “corruption” in creation, these Muslim authors promote distinctively human capacities. In their special appeal to human intelligence and conscience, they assume a human capacity to discerns the need “to treat all things with care

³⁰ In Modern Standard Arabic dictionaries, the term corresponds with moderation, a “middle course,” proper intentions, even right balance. Being “economical,” in this sense, the foresight to save is stressed.

and awe (*taqwā*) of the Creator, compassion (*rahmah*), and utmost good (*ihsān*)” (2.6). As signified in the key term *ihsān*, a fundamental assumption of many Islamic virtue traditions is that virtues are intrinsically “beautiful” (*hasan*). The Arabic term for “utmost good” (*ihsān*) also connotes righteous deeds as perhaps more literally “beautiful action.” In the central hadith of the Angel Gabriel, it is reported according to ‘Umar that a mysterious stranger approached the Prophet Muhammad to interrogate him about the meaning of *islām*, *imān*, and finally *ihsān*. Whereas the first two terms refer to practices of worship and foundational beliefs that define communal identity and those core teachings that the Qur’ān espouses, and the third is an intrinsically performative notion. When asked about *ihsān*, the Prophet Muhammad responds that the notion means that “you should worship (*ta’buda*) God as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet, truly He sees you.”³¹ Perceiving the nearness of God, spiritual practices are habit-forming and are capable of “witnessing” to God while engaging in other activities.

For climate ethics, character traits and virtue alone are sufficient to describe the necessary responses to the crisis. In *Ls*’, Pope Francis explains a relevant vice in the context of climate change is “evasiveness,” that is, “trying not to see [obvious signs of pollution and deterioration], trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen” (sec. 59). As a wider tendency, he identifies this reaction as symptomatic of weak responses, especially for those in positions of power. In addition, what is at stake here is not only the behavior of those who abuse power, but perhaps even the very language of character itself. Addressing Christian theology, he rebukes a certain mindset that resists ecological virtues in the name of prudence. Whether

³¹ See al-Nawāwī, *An-Nawawī’s Forty Hadith: An Anthology of the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1997), 28–33, cited at 30.

passive or “with the excuse of realism or pragmatism” (sec. 217), Pope Francis judges, ecological conversion is needed.

For responding to climate change, Pope Francis states that there is an “educational challenge” (sec. 202). With respect to “young people,” on the one hand, they tend to exhibit “a new ecological sensitivity,” and, on the other hand, “have grown up in a milieu of extreme consumerism” (sec. 209). When elaborating “ecological conversion,” Pope Francis is more concerned with naming particular virtues that are urgently and crucially needed in response, and not scorning vicious habits. In *Ls*’, while submitting his call to ecological conversion, Pope Francis corrects a misimpression that virtue ethics is constrained to personal development, writing: “when there is a general breakdown in the exercise of a certain virtue in personal and social life, it ends up causing a number of imbalances, including environmental ones” (sec. 224).

In response, Pope Francis proposes “sobriety” by calling it a key virtue needed due to the state of ecological disfigurement and “unjust habits” that the technocratic paradigm conditions. There, in view of ecological conversion, readers find a virtue that Pope Francis defines according to an ancient lesson of “less is more” (sec. 222). Some may presume sobriety to be synonymous with austerity, or even that climate change imposes “a lesser life or one lived with less intensity.” In the context of climate change, on the contrary, Pope Francis characterizes sobriety as a “return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack” (sec. 222). Pope Francis’s working definition of sobriety as a virtue describes a Christian spirituality of “learning to see and appreciate beauty” (sec. 215), not a

Christianity of “dominion.” In the view of Pope Francis, this virtue disposes those who are characteristically “sober” to “experience what it means to appreciate each person and each thing, learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them,” instead of “mere accumulation of pleasures” (sec. 223). As a virtuous disposition, sobriety bestows “a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life” (sec. 225). In opposition to the accelerating “rapidification” of the technocratic paradigm, Pope Francis posits, sobriety is “liberating” (sec. 223).

According to Pope Francis, it would be misleading to label sobriety as “new” because, like humility, it is a virtue that was “not favorably regarded in the last century” (sec. 224). As “imbalances” suggest, some virtues fall out of fashion or into desuetude. Reclaiming sobriety, according to his working definition, involves not only a moral attitude but also a social perspective, and furthermore entails both intellectual and ecological dimensions. In this manner, Pope Francis submits an important corrective to virtue ethics, elaborating the crucial insight that human excellence and flourishing must also be considered *ecologically*, with respect to the wider relations with God’s creation.

2.2.2. *Climate Change and Exemplars*

If the ethical challenge requires more than “mere accumulation” of data and information, then, it is also a matter of moral perception. Addressing the guiding assumptions of the technocratic paradigm, Pope Francis perceives: “We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves” (sec. 34). In this way, the task of reshaping character also requires exemplary demonstrations that enact and embody certain dispositions. For example, according to the IDGCC, a salient lesson of frugality includes an important aspect of

“beautiful” character that the Prophet Muhammad exemplifies, as he “took delight in the created world” (2.8). As opposed to abuses that characterize human activities with respect to creation, the Prophet’s example provides a distinct alternative manner of moral engagement. Although virtue ethics tends to assume that character traits are the core focus, as outlined above, underlying assumptions about character depend on moral exemplars.

As further illustration, with regards to the IDGCC, it is interesting to notice how they emphasize the ongoing relevance of the example of Muhammad. In addition to emphasizing Quranic verses that proclaim the inherent value of God’s creation, the authors of the IDGCC reaffirm their response as an act of witnessing specifically to the example of the Prophet Muhammad: “the task [*mukallifūn*] ingrained in us as Muslims is to follow our prophet Muhammad” (2.8).³² Pertinent to the ecological crisis, theologian Aref Ali Nayed similarly argues that positing the Prophet Muhammad for apologetic purposes is neither “deep nor useful.”³³ In the IDGCC, the appeal to Muhammad’s exemplarity should not be confused with the popular appeal of “What would Jesus do?” Rather, as a matter of moral formation, the lessons of this exemplar may elucidate and help inform crucial disposition for confronting the ethical challenges in terms of adapting character.

Let us consider how the IDGCC authors present the figure of Prophet Muhammad to reshape an Islamic response to climate change. Considering the plurality of possible interpretations within Islam, the Muslim authors here do not supply specific prophetic

³² In the Arabic version, it reads: *nagar ba 'nanā kamuslimīn makallifūn bilaqtidā' binabīnā Muhammad salā Allah 'alayhi wa salam*. Translation above is mine. Compare with the English version of the IDGCC: “we affirm that our responsibility as Muslims is to act according to the example of Muhammad (pbuh). Arabic connotations of “responsibility” (*mukallifūn*) include bonds of affection and even potentially falling in love; thus, it potentially exceeds a strictly legalistic sense of “duty.”

³³ See Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 174, and Aref Ali Nayed, “Āyātology and Rahmatology: Islam and the Environment,” in *Building a Better Bridge: Muslims, Christians, and the Common Good*, ed. Michael Ipgrave (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), cited at 161 (161–7).

traditions. Rather, in a basic manner, they outline general teachings and specific actions that gain new significance. For Muslims generally, the Prophet Muhammad exemplifies moderation in practice, a regard that includes his ecological praxis. For example, just as he “guided his companions to conserve water in washing for prayer,” the authors of the IDGCC suggests Muslim acts of ablutions follow the Prophet Muhammad’s practices of conservation,

Considering “unwise” use of resources, additionally, the Prophet Muhammad’s frugality according to the IDGCC is named as a key virtue. The IDGCC suggests, more specifically, that such frugality and moderation is evident in the fact that he “renewed and recycled his meager possessions by repairing or giving them away,” and his diet “only occasionally included meat” (2.8). Without suggesting that Islam offers a full set of solutions to address the crisis, reaffirming the Prophet Muhammad’s exemplarity highlights that to grasp how virtues operate accounts of exemplary spiritual figures, who normatively illustrate the coherence and meaning of a fuller response. In a Muslim viewpoint, thus, the IDGCC authors point out why the Prophet Muhammad embodies the virtues of frugality as he demonstrates a lifestyle that is “free of excess, waste, and ostentation” (2.8). Given contemporary imbalance, due the “relentless pursuit of economic growth” and “short-sighted use” of resources, in stark relief, his exemplarity provides a model for a virtue response.

Fundamentally, it must be added, the Muslim appreciation for the Prophet Muhammad is grounded in the presupposition that his actions serve as “a beautiful model” (*uswatun hasantun*, Q 33:21) to be emulated. Exemplary as such, according to this Quranic injunction, the Prophet Muhammad does more than validate the principle that virtues are

considered teachable. For Muslims, in short, he exemplifies the care and “consciousness” (*taqwa*) of the Creator, compassion (*rahmah*) and utmost good (*ihsan*). His actions provide a way for Muslims to consider how to model their comportment in response to contemporary “corruption” of the earth. Citing the way that Qur’ān characterizes him, these Muslim authors acknowledge that in their perspectives the Prophet Muhammad was a “mercy to all creatures” (Q 21:107, cf. 2.8). In his actions, Muslims can find guiding “signs” for a more compassionate response to climate change.

Regarding the formative significance of exemplary figures, the stress on the moral example that the Prophet Muhammad sets can elucidate such an analogous dynamic in the encyclical. To motivate theological concern for the ecological crisis, Pope Francis invites Christians to align with the “gaze of Jesus” (sec. 96), attentive to God’s relation to all creatures and to the world’s beauty. By “working with his hands,” he reflects, Jesus was “in daily contact with the matter created by God, to which he gave form by his craftsmanship” (sec. 100). A closer parallel to the recent Muslim appeal is found in the way that St. Francis of Assisi figures into the encyclical. According to Pope Francis, his namesake serves Christians as “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically” (sec. 10). As a matter of fact, Pope Francis gleans moral insight from his example, namely “a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled” (sec. 11). This radical commitment, in turn, disposes a different way of relating to our fellow creatures so that each should be understood as “good and admirable in itself” (sec. 140).

Furthermore, the pope’s initial examination of Saint Francis pre-figures those virtues, qualities, and dispositions that readers will come to identify thematically

throughout the encyclical. Explicitly, within the section when the notion of “ecological conversion” is elaborated, Pope Francis draws more heavily on this saintly figure. Like Saint Francis, the pope envisions himself in the role of a “brother” to all creatures, “united” on a “wonderful pilgrimage” as fellow wayfarers toward God’s “infinite light” (sec. 67, 92, 246)—and invites others to do likewise. For his readers, Pope Francis indicates why exemplary figures are crucial for learning virtues. First, as the case with Saint Francis, an exemplary figure “helps” for others to apprehend a vision of “integral ecology,” including all the various dimensions of ecological conversion. For this reason, especially pertinent for Pope Francis’s particular concern, Saint Francis exhibits a profound receptivity insofar as “he felt called to care for all that exists.” In principle, such commitment becomes crucial for connecting virtue ethics with the climate crisis.

Following saintly exemplars, such as Saint Francis, might offer a theological model for practically realizing what “new” virtues mean. While Pope Francis retrieves deeper dimensions of sobriety, he reflects on the significance of Saint Francis’s life and his own “conversion.” In particular, he suggests that the saint’s own transformation is paradigmatic for the call of ecological conversion such that, for Christians, “effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (sec. 217). Thus, this understanding “entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change” (sec. 218). As Pope Francis contends, a resolute commitment to attend ecological disfigurement demands a “profound interior conversion” to alter ingrained habits. As he explains, Saint Francis provides a glimpse into human relations with other creatures in more “familial” terms, such that one of God’s creatures may be seen as a “sister.” Therefore, his example transforms the *de*

facto interconnectedness of creation, beyond “intellectual appreciation or economic calculus,” more deeply into conscious “bonds of affection” (sec. 11). In this way, as his example is framed, Saint Francis “invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness” (sec. 12).

Whereas character issues of a negative kind tend to plague responses to climate change, it is also the case that some exemplars have emerged. Given his effort to offer a view from the optic of the poor, on one occasion, Pope Francis acknowledges how “despite numerous hardships” the poor practice a “commendable human ecology” that transforms their setting and quality of life, suggesting:

The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging. (sec. 148)

For Pope Francis, such examples instantiate the vitality to respond to “environmental limitations,” and thereby to exemplify solidaristic sensibilities. Not to be mistaken as victims, the poor offer an image of flourishing and a scene in which they may demonstrate more virtues operating despite hardships and burdens. This insight suggests that in addition to moral exemplars and saintly figures, more ordinary examples should provide concrete guidance for the necessary skills to respond adaptively to the climate crisis.

Notice how the theological perspective of the IDGCC observes religious others as potential exemplars. The Muslim authors suggest, in conclusion, that Muslims should be able to learn from religious others. On a Quranic basis, in principle, the authors commend being open toward other religions, citing: “But that He (God) may try you in that which He

has given you: So vie with one another in doing good deeds” (Q 5:48, cf. 3.5).³⁴ Rather than an obstacle to meaningful action, by this view, they signal how “moral pluralism” can be regarded as a “blessing,” they write: “if we each offer the best of our respective traditions, we may yet see a way through our difficulties.” Adapting well to climate change, broadly, may have to involve a “friendly” sense of “competition.” In this regard, whereas a notion of “tolerance” usually entails either a strategy of “avoidance” or “disengagement,”³⁵ the Muslim authors take this Quranic verse to exhort a kind of interreligious solidarity. Welcoming difference, as Muslims, they understand that religious others can enhance their ability to understand, describe, and evaluate habits and practices that expand a virtue response.

2.2.3. Climate Change, Habituation, and Social Practices

As this hermeneutic attempt seeks to show, ecological conversion depends on adjusting character with special reference to exemplary figures, and yet as an initial account that is quite schematic. Within the larger “virtue turn” of the field, a key shift in focus underlines the major contribution that virtue ethics affords. In view of climate ethics, Willis Jenkins rightly concludes: “Turning to virtue permits ethics to focus on practices through

³⁴ See IDGCC, 3.5, cf. Q 9:99. For an insider (first two) and outsider (last) perspectives on this Quranic verse, see Asma Afsaruddin, “Tolerance and Pluralism in Islamic Thought and Praxis,” in *Toleration in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Vicki A. Spencer, 99–118 (Lexington Books, 2017), esp. 101–2; Mun’im Sirry, “‘Compete with One Another in Good Works’: Exegesis of Qur’an Verse 5:48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 4 (2009): 432–48; Sohail Hashmi, “The Qur’an and Tolerance: An Interpretive Essay of Verse 5:48,” in *Journal of Human Rights* 2, no. 1 (2003): 81–103; Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997); and, Roy Mottahedeh, “Toward an Islamic Theology of Toleration,” in *Islamic Law Reform and Human Rights: Challenges and Rejoinders*, ed. Tore Lindholm and Kari Vogt, 25–36 (Copenhagen: Nordic Human Rights Publications, 1993); and, with a particularly Christian response, see Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies*, 129.

³⁵ See, e.g., David Hollenbach, “Virtue, the Common Good, and Democracy,” in *New Communitarian Thinking: Persons, Virtues, Institutions, and Communities*, ed. Amitai Etzioni (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995).

which persons can begin to renegotiate their relation to and within the Earth.”³⁶ Attending to social practices, at this stage, provides believers specific concrete means to overcome entrapped dispositions and, as the IDGCC states, to “tackle habits, mindsets, and the root causes of climate change” (3.6.). In short, as a concept, habituation opens a different way of thinking in response to the climate crisis. As such, Thompson and Bendik-Keymer propose, climate ethics must be aware that “the *processes* of adapting ourselves—individually and collectively—can be done well, or not.”³⁷ As such, how adaptation is undertaken practically can serve as a basis of moral excellence. By underscoring habituation as a communal process, virtue ethics should amplify the fundamental dynamic that virtuous practices shape dispositions to act for certain ends. Consequently, Pope Francis proposes that ecological conversion should not be assumed as a sudden change but requires a “long path of renewal” (sec. 202).

Therefore, just as specific social patterns alienate humanity from its role within God’s creation, certain virtuous processes can enable and may start to reform, restoring a sense of balance. What does it mean to be a virtuous person in light of climate change? How do habits and virtues become relevant for addressing root causes, and possibly imagining new ways of flourishing? Responses to such questions, out of a concern for flourishing, involve adaptive practices that reshape character accordingly to respond to conditions that climate change is creating. Character is just a single dimension of virtue ethics; habituation broadens reflection to concrete habit-forming proposals that can generate meaningful, virtuous responses.

³⁶ Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 77.

³⁷ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 8.

Bear in mind how this Islamic approach stresses as a root cause the “unwise” misuse of resources, particularly fossil fuels and especially oil. In the IDGCC, targeting Muslim societies and especially “well-off” and “oil-producing” countries, the Muslim authors outline more precisely and succinctly practical steps to proactively commit toward “renewable energy.” In short, the IDGCC challenges fossil fuel dependence. Although Pope Francis targets destructive tendencies of “technocratic” habits, in common, each approach aims crucially to identify how particular structural injustices and social patterns escalate and intensify climate change. For climate ethics, in the United States, virtue responses ought not avoid confronting connections to this challenge. Five years after its publication, a cynical reading of the IDGCC statement may assume the political impact to be inconsequential; however, as Saleem Ali points out, this overlooks the “changing reality of environmental consciousness in the Middle East.”³⁸ In a sense, the IDGCC gives context to that changing consciousness, reflecting a particularly Muslim point-of-view regarding “our unwise and short-sighted use of the resources” that contributes to the “destruction of the very conditions that have made our life on Earth possible” (1.2). This tragic irony does not encompass the moral point. While readers will find this issue mentioned in the encyclical (sec. 23, 26, 165), the IDGCC’s viewpoints offers acute sensitivity to the catastrophic effects, particularly how in a “brief period since the Industrial Revolution” (1.6, 1.7) human activities have altered natural balance.

³⁸ Saleem H. Ali, “Reconciling Islamic Ethics, Fossil Fuel Dependence, and Climate Change in the Middle East,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 2 (2016): 172–8. Ali’s research interests concern the interaction of environmental conflicts and moral formation in Islamic contexts, see *Treasures of the Earth: Need, Greed, and a Sustainable Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). His scholarship has also contributed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

To correct this misguided dependence on fossil fuels, the Islamic perspective seeks to reclaim into their agenda moral dimensions of “development.” While the communal dynamic of habituation is amply demonstrated in the context of the Prophet Muhammad’s character that IDGCC provides, the pivotal role of social practices must be underscored. A key set of restorative practices, as the IDGCC states, is available in the established institutions and traditions of *himā* and *harīm* that originate in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina.³⁹ Notably, the Prophet Muhammad initiated these distinct conservationist practices as “protected areas” and special zones for preserving water for the wider benefit of the community. With origins in arid regions, where historically the pastoral aim was toward renewal, contemporary approaches may differ due to the dominance of human activities and encroachment into regions of biodiversity. In Indonesia, for example, Islamic schools are striving to provide institutional setting to introduce and facilitate these practices to combat deforestation and loss of biodiversity. In this regard, a Muslim perspective can creatively reaffirm an earlier Islamic example.

In response to climate change, moreover, these virtuous activities may enact a profoundly beneficial sense of interdependence. In this spirit, as the authors of the IDGCC urge, Muslims find kinship with other creatures:

There is no animal on the earth, nor any bird that wings its flight, but is a community [*umma*] like you. (Q 6:38)

In this spiritual sense, as suggested in the IDGCC, Muslims also effectively re-appropriate the character of the Prophet Muhammad by adaptively retrieving these earlier practices. In another sense, in opposition to market values and “unwise” habits, a certain Muslim

³⁹ In chapter 3, these concepts are discussed. Fachruddin Mangunjaya and Jeanne E. McKay, “Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia,” *Worldviews* 16, no. 3 (2012): 286–305.

sensibility refuses to reduce other creatures to economic incentives. For climate ethics, therefore, “growth” and “development” can become reframed in terms of cultivating virtues ecologically.⁴⁰

Regarding the consequences of the “technocratic paradigm,” specifically how it imparts consumerist habits, Pope Francis explicitly aims to address “the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle” (sec. 16, also 203). In this context, with respect to habituating practices, “sobriety” is a poignant virtue term for at least two reasons. First, the term is disruptive. To register the appropriate urgency and basic need for cooperation, at the encyclical’s outset, Pope Francis highlights his predecessor John XXIII, who, “on the brink of nuclear crisis,” “not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace” (sec. 3). Formally, in parallel, Pope Francis’s appeal to sober appreciation for God’s creation devotes critical attention to “harmful habits of consumption” (sec. 55). Just as Pope John XXIII intervened in the nuclear crisis, Pope Francis seeks to avert cataclysmic effects of climate change by presenting an alternative future. In short, as an alternative, “sobriety” is distinguishable from the “unjust habits of a part of humanity” (sec. 93) that further deplete the earth and deprive the poor of the fundamental rights to the benefits of the earth’s fruits.

Second, the virtue of sobriety reminds us of the fact that technocratic habits, especially those pertaining to consumption, are not unlike compulsive behavior. Oil, like alcohol, is a sort of addiction and an environmental disease. Interestingly, though Pope Francis does not draw explicitly from the virtue ethics of Thomas Aquinas to articulate his “key” for ecological conversion,⁴¹ a Thomistic insight helps elucidate how sobriety usefully focuses climate ethics. For Thomas, although the principal role of sobriety pertains

⁴⁰ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 10–3.

⁴¹ In chapter 3, a Thomistic account of temperance will be thoroughly examined.

specifically to alcohol, he argues that as a moral virtue the task of sobriety is to “safeguard the good of reason against those things which may hinder it.” Thus, wherever there is “a special hindrance to reason, there must needs be a special virtue to remove it” as “it disturbs the brain with its fumes.”⁴² The material scope today differs, as the principal focus shifts due to circumstances; nonetheless, in a principled way, acquiring sobriety entails intellectually rebuking consumerist habits, also breaking free of attachments that obstruct human reason from promoting the common good.

Choosing sobriety, in other words, begins to engender a different moral outlook, with its own separate set of ethical priorities. In a key different from the Thomistic sense, the encyclical recovers sobriety as a particularly affective kind of virtuous sensibility. Whereas Thomas defines sobriety in the negative, as the absence of “drunkenness,” the encyclical valorizes sobriety constructively. Pope Francis agrees, to be clear, that a more sober outlook requires appropriate “intellectual virtues,” writing: “Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer” (sec. 223). Beyond the Thomistic sense, he suggests, sobriety underlines the wider repercussions of consumerist extravagance. Revaluating sobriety, due to the ecological crisis, Pope Francis indicates the import of this virtuous disposition when he advises that it is possible to replace “unjust habits” simply if one becomes “capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” (sec. 222). Thus, sobriety redefines a virtue approach to climate change because it imparts a radically relational sense of fulfillment.

⁴² See *ST* IIa IIae q149 a2 co, and q149 a1 co.

In the context of the “throwaway culture” and habitual consumption, formally, we may appreciate that sobriety involves prophetic and contemplative dimensions. Practically, as with any intended and habitual activity, becoming more sober would require a sort of discipline. As a key point assumed in the encyclical, Saint Francis foreshadows this notion. Whether through political strategies or small gestures, Pope Francis sketches a “new way of thinking” (sec. 215) and “feeling” (sec. 217) that counters technocratic habits. Primarily, adopting sober practices restores a different kind of relation to other creatures. From a Catholic perspective, this insight points toward a moral virtue that is infused with the sense that acknowledges God-given capacities to encounter another creature as a “thou.” In recognition of the grace to perceive the presence of God in creation, a crucial aspect of this approach involves a deepened appreciation for mutual relations with all creatures.

As Pope Francis recommends, a dialogical inclination involves a “willingness to learn from one another” (sec. 214). By way of practicing hospitality, he suggests that a specific way Christians can rediscover a sense of sobriety as “learning to see and appreciate beauty” (sec. 215). In engaging Islam, Christians might appreciate a basic principle that Pope Francis promotes as relevant for a deeper sense of sobriety. For him, this virtue disposes us to remember the presence of God in creatures as an “all-powerful and Creator” (sec. 75). Although a particularly Catholic sacramental outlook imparts a “mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face” (sec. 233), he alerts Christians to the fact that likewise Muslim spiritual traditions understand God in and through potential loci of divine manifestation. As cited in ‘Alī al-Khawwas’s spiritual poetry, he suggests that how humanity can become attuned to the ways that God’s creative agency sustains the universe:

Prejudice should not have us criticize those who seek ecstasy in music or poetry. There is a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world. The initiate will capture what is being said when the wind blows, the trees sway, water flows, flies buzz, doors creak, birds sing, or in the sound of strings or flutes, the sighs of the sick, the groans of the afflicted.⁴³

In this “ideal” passage, more specifically, Pope Francis invites Christians to engage sobriety as a grace-infused moral virtue that would enable them “to discover God in all things.” For Muslims, in this sense, these creatures ought to be received as “signs” (*āyāt*) of God’s mercy and lordship and understanding them, according to Alī al-Khawwas, not unlike learning to listen to music. As numerous Quranic verses exhort, stars, trees, animals all in their ways praise and “prostrate” to God. To this end, correcting harmful habits, Pope Francis suggests the benefits of more robust engagement with Islam that might offer a potentially fruitful dialogue.

2.2.4. *Climate Change and Communal Narratives*

In religious contexts, it becomes clearer that the pursuit of virtues depends particularly upon communal narratives. Exemplary figures and their lives, as a matter of fact, provide a crucial way of learning virtues. In this regard, clearly, the Muslim authors of the IDGCC clearly emphasize how the Prophet Muhammad’s character and actions ought to be central to reevaluating Muslim identity—and thus, the appropriate virtue responses, particularly in opposition to those anthropogenic causes that precipitate the climate crisis. Accordingly, communal identity instills a shared story that gives meaning through a “larger narrative framework,” and intelligibility to actions. As Lucas Chan points out, the “central bond of a community is the shared understanding of, and the shared vision of goods,” which are certainly context-sensitive but “not ultimately relative to a limited to

⁴³ See *LS*’ sec. 233 n159, citing Eve de Vitray-Meyerovitch, ed., *Anthologie du sufisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1978), 200. In that anthology, this section on “religious sensations” includes writings of al-Ghazālī, Rūmī and others.

context,” whether that is a particular cultural identity or religious background.⁴⁴ In common, virtues intrinsically encompass shared goods.

Furthermore, as Pope Francis suggests, the right response demands more than amassing information and data. Instead, more broadly, he suggests the necessity to reinterpret the power of communal narratives in the struggle against climate change.⁴⁵ In this regard, the communal context also sheds light on the distinctly teleological perspective of virtue ethics. It is an aspect that theological approaches may need to further develop. While commenting on the encyclical, Willis Jenkins alerts theologians to practical obstacles that confront those who are captive to the current paradigm. Whereas some readers may scoff at the notion of “ecological virtues,” others may consider the reasoning insufficient for why, say, sobriety rightfully distinguishes good character. In this manner, thus Jenkins warns, criticizing the encyclical: “[*Ls*]’ describes everyday environmentalism as subversive spirituality, but does not explain how and why certain ecological habits make us into better, more authentic persons.”⁴⁶ As Jenkins worries, failure to clarify explicitly how ecological concerns fit within an account of genuine human flourishing may inhibit how we as humans can come to appreciate the expanse and depth of flourishing. With Jenkins, others may raise fundamental questions about whether a particular ecological praxis rises to the standards of the good life, or how ecological integrity fits within particularly Christian visions of human flourishing.

From his Christian perspective, however, Pope Francis contends that climate change and more broadly the ecological crisis reveals the “ruptured” state of human

⁴⁴ See Chan, *Biblical Ethics*, 91, 93.

⁴⁵ For a representative work of this parallel movement within the field of comparative literature, see Martin Puchner, *Literature for a Changing Planet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

⁴⁶ Willis Jenkins, “The Mysterious Silence of Mother Earth in *Laudato si*,” *JRE* 46, no. 3 (2018): 453.

relations. Saint Francis experienced a “healing of that rupture,” he notes, but this was “a far cry from our situation today” (sec. 66). For Pope Francis, “happiness” involves adapting ourselves well to the challenges posed by climate change. Perhaps more accurately, it is recovering a more mundane sense of “care” that can generate what Jenkins perceives as a “hopeful” turn in climate ethics, especially for stimulating “humans to develop new forms of responsibility and rethink the form of a good life.”⁴⁷ Illustrated through biblical theology, his guiding pastoral concern is directed more precisely toward moral renewal. Noticing how he seeks to correct the church’s misguided support of “dominionist” activities, readers of the encyclical will find neither a philosophical discourse on rights and responsibilities, scientific data, nor a cost-benefit analysis of different adaptive strategies. But they do encounter—perhaps painfully—the challenging concrete particularities.

In conclusion, the encyclical’s readers should also notice that Pope Francis promotes figures who avail insights into what alternative sense of what flourishing means. Just as Pope Francis takes up the vocational narratives of his namesake to help readers, other figures he mentions are vital signposts. Promoting Thérèse of Lisieux, for example, Pope Francis specifically points at “the little way of love” (sec. 230). The example she sets does more than support the related point of the inherent “nobility to care for creation through little daily actions” (sec. 211). Ultimately, “social love” provides one of the central points of the encyclical. In addition, whether Catholic or not, readers may readily identify in these narratives the means for implicating personal actions and renewing civic responses to climate change.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ This point helps frame the goal of the comparative theological exercise in chapter 4.

⁴⁸ Analogously, Charles de Foucauld elucidates the spiritual significance of “work,” exemplifying “the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves” (sec. 125). This example may

For the sake of Muslim-Christian dialogue, in this vein, the Islamic scholar Rashied Omar's insightful reading of the encyclical finds appeal for Muslims.⁴⁹ For Omar, Pope Francis strikes a sympathetic chord, noting his explicit acknowledgement of Saint Francis in his overture for dialogue. As a Muslim, Omar is reminded of the historic encounter between Sultan al-Kamil, an Egyptian ruler, and Saint Francis of Assisi.⁵⁰ In 1219, at the height of military conflict, the sultan hosted the friar, who had crossed battlelines with the initial intent of converting him. Instead, over the course of several weeks, an unexpected friendship developed according to a shared vision of universal peace. As Pope Francis urges Christians toward dialogue, correspondingly, Omar thinks Muslims should accept the "dialogical challenge" with a "comparable spirit of reverence and hospitality" that characterized the way Sultan al-Kamil welcomed Saint Francis. Approaching climate change dialogically, on the basis of communal narratives, religious traditions can supply theological models. In this way, religious communities would resist a harmful temptation that could persist, namely the group-solidarity that excludes the participation of religious others. Constructively, moreover, Omar offers one viewpoint that aligns with Pope Francis's notion that virtues are derived from a sense of compassionate care and in the interest of the common good.

be especially pertinent for Muslim-Christian dialogue; see, e.g., Ali Merad, *Charles de Foucauld au regard de l'Islam* (Paris: Chalet, 1975). The figure of "blessed" Charles de Foucauld also plays an important role in Pope Francis's second encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

⁴⁹ Rashied Omar, "A Muslim Response to Pope Francis's Environmental Encyclical: *Laudato si'*," *Contending Modernities: A Blog about Catholic, Muslim, and Secular Interaction in the Modern World* (15 December 2015), <https://sites.nd.edu/contendingmodernities/2015/12/17/a-muslim-response-to-pope-francis-environmental-encyclical-laudato-si/> (access 19 August 2017).

⁵⁰ See also Powell, "Implications for Legal Thought," 1398. For a Catholic view, see Dawn Nothwehr, "A Model for Muslim-Catholic Dialogue on Care for the Earth: Vatican II, St. Francis and the Sultan, and Pope Francis," in *Catholicism Engaging Other Faiths: Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. 265–84 (Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); and Paul Rout, "St. Francis of Assisi and Islam: A Theological Perspective on a Christian-Muslim Frontier," *Al-Masāq* 23, no. 3 (2011): 205–15.

Regarding the statement of the IDGCC, obliquely, the Muslim authors draw particularly upon communal narratives that help judge “corrupting the earth” aright. With heightened awareness of social and ecological ramifications, this recurrent scriptural theme would remind the Muslim audience of the stories of Pharaoh, Thamūd, and ‘Ād perhaps, simply as “stories of punishment.”⁵¹ Typically, the metaphorical term “corruption” is contrasted with *ihsān* (simply, “enacting the good” and “seeking the beautiful”).⁵² In these Quranic narratives, communal precursors failed to recognize terrestrial obligations specifically to the “land” and to treat all God’s creatures as a gift. In effect, these stories implicate a violation of the trust that God endows humanity. In the Anthropocene, one possible way that this communal narrative of “corrupting the earth” frames the ethical challenge is toward humanity becoming more accountable to the consequential effects of human agency. In this respect, more keenly aware of the centrality of God as Creator, these communal narratives might bestow moral sensibilities with the consciousness that ecological relations belong within the divine commands to “establish good and avert evil.”

In sum, communal narratives help tie character and climate change together, thus providing a possible basis for more coherent virtue responses. Functionally, as suggested above, communal narratives can serve as mirror for reflecting the political reality, including humanity within the current state of planetary disfigurement. For Christians, given this Islamic narrative, we can compare a shared biblical notion that is founded in the Genesis account of Noah, “for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen 6:13, cf. sec. 70). In the Muslim inheritance of this biblical theme, however, the primary lesson

⁵¹ Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur’an and Muslim Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002), 45–70.

⁵² See Toshiko Izutsu, *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur’an* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1961), 211–13. The term *fasād*, and variants, almost exclusively refer to the earth (*al-‘ard*) as its object.

is not confined to moral wickedness, but rather turns to identify with those prophetic examples who are committed to stand resolutely in protest and opposition.

2.3. “How Do We Best Respond”? A Dialogical Pathway toward Climate Justice

In *Ethical Adaptation*, Thompson and Bendik-Keymer propose a method of moral reasoning that, reflexively, attempts to deliberate more effectively, exercising prudential judgment about the best ways to meet new and projected ecological conditions. In this regard, addressing the creative tension between who we are and how we enable ourselves, crucial focus shifts from capabilities to specifically those means and conditions that make possible the pursuit of human flourishing. In adaptation to climate change, emphatically, virtue frameworks must account for the reality how flourishing and “human virtue is embedded in our relation to the Earth’s ecology.”⁵³ In recognition of shared problems, more dialogically, we might turn toward developing a more inclusive and engaged line of approach, which regards the cultivation of virtue responses as a potentially fruitful basis for approaching the injustices of climate change.

In response to climate change, what might a renewed politics of the common good look like? How might a greater commitment to dialogues of social action help foster a pathway to climate justice? Practically speaking, in this dialogical manner, how might hospitality engender and build necessary networks of solidarity? In addressing concrete problems that disrupt and affect common life, which dispositions and habits are beneficial and necessary to cultivate? Which problematic states are addressed by these corresponding virtues? Drawing takeaways, by way of dialogue, we can recognize some guiding themes.

1. Radical Inequality, Holistic Thinking, and Exercising Sobriety

⁵³ Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” cited at 12. See also Hartman, “Introduction,” 4–8.

Critically, for the sake of the common good, virtue standpoints ought to identify and incorporate the needs of the most vulnerable and poorest, who suffer and are disproportionately impacted by anthropogenic climate change. As Pope Francis teaches, from an ethical perspective, understanding the ethical challenge of climate change requires deeper recognition that the unfolding crisis worsens the radical inequality that the poor experience daily. In dialogue with the Muslim perspectives that comprise the IDGCC, we have already explored how temperance could be integrated into becoming the types of persons we should be and support innate capabilities to discipline a different economy of desire. Let me try to highlight, then, how these interconnections can shift the critical aims of a dialogical approach in terms of virtue.

One of the primary aims, in this dissertation, is to provide a method of moral reasoning that enables “holistic thinking.” How can virtue ethics foster a commitment to the whole, while also grounding ethical attention with a particular sense of place? Building solidarity, how can we appropriately, constructively, and carefully connect with ethical challenges in other localities? According to Pope Francis, in opposition to the “assault of the technocratic paradigm,” he appeals for development of “integral ecology.” In this way, according to the encyclical, “there needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and spirituality” (sec. 111).

The central issue that the discipline of comparative theology can tackle is the need for hospitable encounters and relative lack of dialogical engagement. For Catholics, moral theologian James Keenan explains that virtues should not be the final word on necessary responses and right action, rather “among the first, providing the bare essentials for right

human living and specific action.”⁵⁴ In a pluralist setting especially such as the United States, like others, Jenkins fears that questions of the good life are thus “irreducibly controversial.” Whereas some think, that public engagement with climate change should avoid moralizing about climate change in virtue terms, Jenkins thinks that it is not only unavoidable, but also that to an extent whether humanity more justly manages its planetary powers depends on character. However, Jenkins does not fully embrace virtue ethics, and one plausible argument for Jenkins’s strategy is an intentional reluctance. For Jenkins, ultimately, religious virtues transmit visions of moral goodness and ultimate ends. Like others, he may be heeding the warning of Alasdair MacIntyre, who famously questioned whether in different contexts the same virtue term conveys the same meaning.⁵⁵ For this apparent reason, as a particular “hazard,” Jenkins believes virtue ethics may be derailed because “virtues depend on a vision of the good.”⁵⁶ Simply put, religious virtues transmit visions of moral goodness and ultimate ends. Conflicting visions of flourishing and differences in ultimate aims, furthermore, might only serve to intensify cultural conflict. But, in the end, his opinion also reflects a theology of religions that regards particular religious traditions as inevitably incommensurable.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ James F. Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” *TS* 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–29, cited at 715; idem, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 148–9; also Daniel J. Harrington and idem, *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 11. For philosophical discussion on the “thin”/“thick” conceptions of virtue, see Martha Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach,” *Midwestern Studies in Philosophy* 13 (1988): 32–53, and Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana, 1985). For the Thomistic basis of Keenan’s “skeletal” claims, see *ST Ia IIae* q61 aa2–3.

⁵⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 93–4, cf. Allen Thompson, “The Virtue of Responsibility for the Global Climate,” in Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*. See chapter 5.

⁵⁷ For more on “particularism” as a distinct paradigm, see Catherine Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2019), 49–53.

From a virtue standpoint, however, this misunderstanding overlooks the basic function and the beneficial commonality of cultivating virtues. Following Thomas Aquinas, for example, Keenan explains that the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude are basic to understanding the “cardinal” quality of these transformative keys: “As hinges, the cardinal virtues provide a *skeleton* of both what human persons should basically be and at what human action should aim.”⁵⁸ Moreover, as Keenan explains that, in this “skeletal” sense, virtue language can “actually provide us with a way of talking across cultures.”⁵⁹ For climate ethics, instead of ultimate aims, the standards of justice should concrete on specific means and necessary conditions.

In many Islamic traditions, analogously, the four principal virtues also shape understandings of who persons should be and how to practically measure human actions. For Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī the basic aim of his account stresses that the basic aim is to practice temperance as the primary training-ground for cultivating virtues. In accord, this classic virtue account lends a useful perspective by which to critique potential limitations of Thomistic virtue ethics. In response to climate change, moreover, his account offers an appropriate developmental perspective regarding the emergent *eco-pesantren* paradigm of Indonesia. In this paradigm, bodily practices are central to the cultivation of ecological virtues. Concretely, according to communal practices, the specific means involve actively exercising, training, and discernment of necessary dispositions. This concrete emphasis offers another learning-focused point for cultivating virtues.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 714. See also Keenan, “Toward an Inclusive Vision for Moral Theology, Part II: An Agenda for the Future,” *Pacifica* 13 (2000): 67–83, cited at 80.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 715. For a similar philosophical account, see Bryan W. van Norden, “Introduction,” in *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007),

In this way, we can begin to address and deepen Pope Francis's appeal to sobriety as a key disposition to resist, challenge and counteract consumerist habits. Although Pope Francis's use of "sobriety" resonates with the Thomistic understanding, in the context of market societies and excessive consumption, it also marks a striking departure. Analogously, between Muslims and Christians, the similarities and differences can lead us to reevaluate "friendship" as a particularly theological foundation for developing ecological virtues. For climate ethics, in this manner, we shall address basic needs for positive self-identity, promote virtue cultivation with special reference to practicing temperance (specifically sobriety), and start creating networks of respect and the conditions for more hospitable encounters.

2. Humanity, Cultivating Ecological Virtues, and Terrestrial Habits

In the service of climate ethics, we need more robust engagement with the ecological dimension of virtue cultivation than religious communities are generally accustomed. From a comparative theological perspective, I think, virtue ethics ought to stress the crucial question regarding how human flourishing relates to ecological flourishing. Without discrete focus toward this relation, virtue ethics might proceed basically inattentive to the particularities of non-human creatures or unaware that human flourishing depends on ecological well-being. Furthermore, based on the Quranic figure of *khalīfah*, climate ethics can re-examine the principal obligation of humanity to the land itself. For the sake of cultivating virtue responses according to this more "terrestrial" bent, lines of dialogical approach can re-examine humanity's vocation in light of climate change and should "broaden" justice in accord with law.

Promoting conditions for friendship, based on mutual respect, a comparative theological should also promote goods that ought to be shared and understood in common. More specifically in this chapter, first, respect for nature must be developed as a human good that transcends cultural and religious differences. By way of dialogue, second, climate ethics is reconfigured and exposed to various reasons why we should respect nature, as a basic matter of human flourishing, for the sake of ecological integrity, to protect God's creation, and including concern for the poor and future generations. What is required here, therefore, are virtue accounts that both lend integral models of moral agency, and particular examples that shed light on virtues as "common" goods. Although the ecological dimension of virtue cultivation poses unfamiliar questions for religious traditions, friendship may provide a more holistic basis from which to pursue justice in accordance with law, and for reasons that exceed a legal framework. In this regard, moreover, both a Thomistic and Ghazalian accounts offers a foothold for developing the virtues of practical wisdom to encompass greater respect for nature.

In response to the relational question, by developing attunement and enacting greater respect for nature, I argue that Christians and Muslims should seriously reevaluate how human flourishing depends on ecological well-being. In accord, a caregiver model of restorative justice develops necessary attunement and enacts greater respect for nature to restore a sense of moral agency. For the sake of cultivating virtue responses according to this more "terrestrial" bent, lines of dialogical approach can re-examine humanity's vocation. The identification of habitual dispositions, ecological participation, and more specifically attuned and respectful actions offer possible ways to support and sustain virtue responses that can better identify goods that are shared and might gain political traction in

ways that arguments about “green” policies cannot. For climate ethics, in this manner, we shall address widespread needs for positive self-efficacy, while attempting to incorporate ecological concerns with virtue cultivation.

3. *Building Resilience, Civic Hope, and Ecological Restoration*

Attempting to build solidarity, the Muslim authors of the IDGCC appeal also to “resilience” (*murūnah*), concluding with a specific call of collective action for “increasing the resilience of all, and especially the most vulnerable” (3.3). For the sake of the greater common good, in this way, they specifically name and issue a universal challenge for virtue responses. How can we learn to build resilience?

In the traumatic aftermath of super-typhoon Haiyan, in the Philippines, Agnes Brazal tries to elucidate a definitive sense of resilience as more a “constellation of virtues” than a single trait, positing resilience as generally “the ability to (1) deal with vicissitudes; (2) maintain competencies—physical, psychosocial, and spiritual, on the personal, familial, and communal levels—despite stress; and (3) adapt creatively on the personal and social levels.”⁶⁰ What precisely and practically this means depends on location, cultural context, and relatively it is a communal matter of capabilities. Nonetheless, from the lived experience of the Tacloban survivors who adapt, Brazal identifies a nascent sense of resilience that relates to the Thomistic view of fortitude. Re-articulating resilience from a descriptive to a virtue term, Brazal traces parallels in how resilience works. Just as in Thomas’s view early Christian martyrs displayed “initiative” (*aggredi*) and endurance (*sustinere*), Brazal observes a similar capacity for “risk taking” that is constitutive of

⁶⁰ Brazal, “Resilience,” 58; she relies extensively on the virtue definition of “resilience” provided in Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

becoming resilient.⁶¹ Thus, in a sense, she associates the resilience of the typhoon survivors who likewise are “firmly standing up for the truth in the face of overwhelming opposition or evil,” with enduring fortitude of early Christian martyrs, whom Thomas identifies as the moral paradigms of fortitude. However, in the end, Brazal favors a different image, namely bamboo. In this sense, rejecting this Thomistic story of the early martyrs, Brazal relates a distinctively Filipina sense of resilience, explaining a resilient disposition “bends with the strong wind but is able to bounce back again.”

In addition to becoming more hospitable to vulnerabilities, as religious studies scholar Nancy Menning highlights, communal narratives are particularly useful for registering the epic “scale of the transformations underway and the challenges before us.” For climate ethics, as she proposes, the power of communal narratives might be strategically employed toward narrating a collective “rite-of-passage.” In this transformative sense, the right communal narratives might provide useful frameworks and basic structure for understanding key lessons in adaptive moral learning. For Menning the Exodus story provides a model for just transitions with a detailed account of “extended time in the desert, during which the Israelites embraced a new identity.” Moreover, the biblical account, she alludes to the reality that some Israelites continued to collaborate with the Pharaoh. Furthermore, importantly in her view, the story furnishes significant parallels with “its prophetic voices, political struggles, vacillations of commitment, and extended liminality.”⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., 60: “*Aggredi* was manifest in the Haiyan survivors who risked walking several kilometers through two-story-high debris to get to where aid was available, or as with Gloria, to get medicines for her paralyzed son.”

⁶² Nancy Menning, “Narrating Climate Change as a Rite of Passage,” *Climatic Change* 147, no. 1-2 (2018): 343–53, cited at 350, 347, cf. Mike Hulme, “Beyond Climate Change,” in *Why We Disagree about Climate*

Likewise, when Muslims think of resilience, this more comprehensive appeal to build resilient responses may become rooted communal narratives. In *The Polished Mirror*, drawing from Alasdair MacIntyre’s insight that humans “are naturally driven by narratives and need some defined end or *telos*,” Muslim ethicist Cyrus Ali Zargar illuminates developmental purpose of Islamic storytelling practices that were centrally concerned with cultivating particular dispositions and certain virtues.⁶³ Across many genres and according to varying methods, as a matter of moral formation, Zargar highlights a profound appreciation for the power of communal narratives to serve instructive purposes, even targeting unhelpful assumptions and aiming to disarm excessively rationalistic tendencies.

For climate ethics, thus, the task of building resilience might draw deeply from Islamic roots. When Muslims think of resilience, they would possibly find these roots in the prophetic traditions of Moses, Sālih, and Hūd. As exemplary figures, these prophetic figures are understood to have opposed the obstinate arrogance of their own people by proclaiming the oneness (*tawhīd*) of God. For the sake of supporting social justice, drawing upon their examples, consider how theologian Martin Nguyen regards their narratives:

The prophet Moses stood against the tyranny of the people of Pharaoh—who *afflicted you with terrible torment slaughtering your sons and sparing your women* (Q 2:49). The prophet Sālih stood against the reckless excessiveness of the people of Thamūd. *And obey the command of the intemperate, who sow corruption upon the earth, doing not what is right!* (Q 26:151–2) The prophet Hūd stood against the monumentalism and self-aggrandizement of the people of ‘Ād. *Do you build on every height a sign to amuse yourselves? And do you occupy strongholds thinking*

Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 340–57. For a contextual study, see Wolfgang Kempf, “Climate Change, Christian Religion and Songs: Revisiting the Noah Story in the Central Pacific,” in *Environmental Transformations and Cultural Responses: Ontologies, Discourses, and Practices in Oceania*, ed. Eveline Dürr and Arno Pascht, 19–48 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁶³ Cyrus Ali Zargar, *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (London: Oneworld, 2017), cited at 22, cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 208, 215. See James W. Morris, “Situating Islamic ‘Mysticism’: Between Written Traditions and Popular Spirituality,” in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, edited by Robert A. Herrera, 293–334. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.

that you may live forever? And when you strike out, do you strike out as tyrants? (Q 26: 128–30).⁶⁴

As Nguyen explains, like “performed prayers,” stories of these prophetic figures exemplify why “God loves the just” (Q 49:9) with righteous actions and indignant protests against injustice. Whereas biblical prophets may emphasize disasters foretold and portend communal failure, in Islamic perspectives, prophetic figures typically exemplify struggle, resistance, and resolution despite fierce opposition. In prophetic traditions, according to the Quranic perspective, these stories provide “lessons for those who understand” (Q 2:66).⁶⁵ For Nguyen, it is understood that “[t]hrough these God-sent exemplars, we have come to learn how to join the fire of our faith in God and the fire of our righteous indignation against the darknesses and iniquities of the world.”

Although not explicit in this tradition, beyond the Prophet Muhammad’s example, the Islamic tradition offers standards and notions of resilience that may be identifiable in such canonical stories. For instance, in the story of Sālih, we find a messenger who is sent to preach in opposition to the people of Thamūd, whose actions manifest in “corrupting the earth.” Choosing to refuse the message, the Thamūd challenge Sālih to perform a miracle to validate his message. As the story relates, a pregnant she-camel emerged from the rock as a gift for the people of Thamūd. Following Sālih, some people of Thamūd prostrate before the she-camel as a sign of the power of God’s majesty, but most resisted. Having given birth, the she-camel as well as her offspring served as a significant bond of affection

⁶⁴ Martin Nguyen, *Modern Muslim Theology: Engaging the World with Faith and Imagination* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 172, 173.

⁶⁵ For these “Arabian” prophets, in addition to Tottoli (fn 51), see: Brannon Wheeler, *Prophets in the Qur’an: An Introduction to the Qur’an and Muslim Exegesis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 63–73, 74–82, and 173–97; Marianna Klar, “Stories of the Prophets,” in *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Qur’ān*, eds. Andrew Rippin and Jawid Mojadeddi, 2nd ed., 406–17 (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2017). For the most comprehensive and influential example of this genre, see Ahmad ibn Muhammad Tha’labī, *‘Arā’is al-majālis fī qisas al-anbiyā, or Lives of the Prophets*, ed. William Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

between Sālih's followers and God. Yet the narrative also suggests a painful insensitivity toward their suffering, when the people of Thamūd did not permit the she-camel and offspring to drink from their wells, instead slaughtering the animals. Yet, remaining, Sālih warns them that God's punishment awaited: "Enjoy life for another three days; this warning will not prove false" (Q 11:67).

In a similar spirit, the strategy of "prophetic pragmatism" is forged with this awareness that communal narratives are endowed with the motivating power to help us think, act, and live in response to climate change. As Willis Jenkins states, drawn from the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, this prophetic sense believers "faith in a transformative God appropriately drives moral creativity."⁶⁶ Regarding King's example, in particular, Jenkins identifies the "perfect portrait of a Protestant saint," who is "tortured by self-doubt and sin, yet faithful enough in God's call to follow it beyond his own sense of unworthiness."⁶⁷ In response to climate change, arguably, analogous challenges require reminders from historical lessons.⁶⁸ Moreover, according to Jenkins, King sometimes found elsewhere "the paradox that the reality of church may be practiced by those are not members of churches."⁶⁹ For Christians, in other words, this prophetic sensibility engenders a political ecclesiology that likewise seeks examples receives insights from outside ecclesial life. In this way, Jenkins draws upon communal narratives to help

⁶⁶ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 11.

⁶⁷ Willis Jenkins, "Conclusion: Christian Social Ethics after Bonhoeffer and King," in *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacy and Import for Christian Social Thought*, eds. Willis Jenkins and Jennifer McBride (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 247.

⁶⁸ See Kevin J. O'Brien, *The Violence of Climate Change: Lessons of Resistance from Nonviolent Activists* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 35, cf. Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 1: "Concerned people know that we face new challenges, but in order to face them well, we need reminders that we have resources from the past with which to do so."

⁶⁹ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 102–3, cf. Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 207–10.

generate the possibilities of moral agency, and “an odd way of being a material, encultured creature—a way of living life as a response to God,” proposing the ethical task should commit critical participation to support attempts to create “a cultural space for the possibility of discipleship in a world of atmospheric human powers.”⁷⁰

Promoting the common good, as we have further established this groundwork, virtue approaches to climate justice can create a hospitality space to receive climate vulnerabilities and respond to the call of justice with questions of the good life. For climate ethics, in this chapter, we have attempted to illustrate reasons why hospitality fulfills a necessary condition of adaptive moral learning. Concurrently, it is an argument against the claim that theological approaches seriously consider these pluralistic conditions when there is no actual engagement, practical lessons and common goods that are drawn from religious others. Willis Jenkins is probably right that virtue ethics cannot solve the differences in ultimate aims, but he also suggests that there may be persistent conflicts and disagreements about questions of the good life. But is he correct in thinking that the proper focus of virtue ethics, amidst conditions of moral pluralism and cultural conflict, is to judge and deliberate about the specific means that are shared and to enact the necessary conditions of flourishing? Is he warranted in supposing this is not possible? For Jenkins, the principle of hospitality accords a conception of respect to religious others that effectively ignores, never engaging questions of the good life with their particular visions of flourishing.

For the sake of the common good, alternatively, the Muslim authors of the IDGCC recognizes the necessity of a “fresh model of well-being” (3.3), specifically exhorting that the call of justice requires Muslims to “tackle habits, mindsets, and the root causes of

⁷⁰ Jenkins, “Doing Theological Ethics with Incompetent Christians,” 62.

climate change, environmental degradation, and the loss of biodiversity” (3.6). Based on mutual respect, they recognize the “significant contributions taken by other faiths,” with whom they can align in “collaboration, co-operation, and friendly competition” (3.5). In solidarity with one another, thus, hospitable encounters become possible by respectfully engaging religious differences, including those theological reasons, moral sensibilities, and communal narratives upon which virtue responses depend. More dialogically, in this way, we must reconcile human flourishing and rectify terrestrial habits.

Conclusion: Confronting Challenging Tasks Ahead

Over the course of this chapter, in comparative perspective, we have examined the development of virtue ethics in two landmark religious statements. In common, it is argued, these theological approaches show how a hermeneutics of virtue ethics is factored into their approaches to climate change. Addressing the root causes, they indicate reasons why virtue ethics is useful for reframing complex challenges, adaptive deliberations, and questions of the good life. Thus, this chapter examines: how to question prevailing norms of flourishing; how to critique root causes of climate change; and comparative aims can elucidate the need to adjust character, re-engage exemplars and communal narratives in light of climate change, cultivate virtue for the sake of ecological conversion. Considering the theological approaches of *Ls*’ and the IDGCC, by practicing hospitality, a more inclusive approach is introduced. This dialogical line of approach concentrates specifically toward the practical means and vital conditions that might allow others to flourish.

**By Virtue of the Ecological Thought:
Exercising Sobriety, Strange Strangers, and the Challenge of Holistic Thinking**

This chapter argues that the virtue of temperance offers an urgently necessary and fruitful framework for approaching Muslim-Christian dialogue on the climate crisis. Considering the challenges and potential constraints of a virtue-based framework, the need to rehabilitate temperance is articulated by selectively expanding its meaning in a material sense and amplifying its practical importance for the sake of climate justice. An Indonesian Islamic “reform project,” namely the *eco-pesantren* movement, provides an object lesson for practicing temperance in the face of climate change. This actual example of cultural change provides the substantive basis to further implicate virtue perspectives and to re-envision the scope and meaning of temperance. Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī’s development of the virtue of renunciation suggests a way to recover a Christian renunciatory bent in virtue ethics, and yet a Thomistic foundation counterbalances the possible world-denying proclivities of Ghazālī. This chapter focuses on temperance with the aim of contributing a better understanding of sobriety as a key ecological virtue to be developed in future work.

This chapter presents an experimental exercise of comparative theological reflection, employing the discipline in a manner that follows the basic method of prophetic pragmatism. As such, from a Catholic perspective, this exercise draws attention toward an Islamic context, a “reform project” in Indonesia, emphasizing the possibility of reinhabiting virtue in an ecological key of temperance. To this end, developing sobriety in light of climate change, the chapter addresses the challenge of “holistic thinking.”

Introductory Considerations

As the very idea of “climate change” itself conspires to disrupt, unsettle, and derail moral agents from sufficient ethical attention, in response, cultivating particular virtues might occasion the capacity building to reorient and situate ethical inquiry for the urgent challenges at hand. Last chapter, as the Muslim scholars who crafted the “Islamic Declaration” exhorted, an initial portrait of “resilience”—as a revised form of courage—was sketched to indicate how such a disposition can be fostered for readers of *Laudato si’*.

Such a burgeoning attitude, as we posited, can address the disinclination that conditions withdrawal altogether from the topic of climate change, as well as necessary tasks that are associated with “ecological conversion.” In this chapter, we direct our attention elsewhere.

Climate change is increasingly characterized as more than a technical and economic problem, and properly understood and cast as a crisis, which is existential and spiritual in nature. Due to climate change, as Kari Marie Norgaard describes in *Living in Denial*, the *Bygdabyingar* express a fear of the changes that seem to threaten their sense of identity, at once individual and collective. Norgaard attributes this effect to a perceived lack of “ontological security,” that is, the notional “confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and constancy of the surrounding social and material environments in action.” One can get a sense, Norgaard reports, from some of the disturbing questions that the issue of climate change raises, such as: “What will Norwegian winters be like without snow? What will happen to farms in the community in the next generation? Will they, in the words of one Bygdaby resident, ‘begin growing oranges in Norway?’” Or: “If the climate continues to warm, how are people going to make a living and maintain their lifestyles in 50 years? 100 years?”¹ Now in the United States, just as then in Norway, this increased awareness of climate change can raise new existential questions, ordeals, and debates. In short, due to its reception, the topic continues to cause alarm. Virtue ethics needs to anticipate such difficulties accordingly.

The Basic Need of Positive Self-Identity

For those who reflect deeply on the impact and ethical challenge of climate change, reframing the issue is in order. As suggested in the last chapter, theological appraisals

¹ Norgaard, *Living in Denial*, 81–2. For more on this notion, see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 92.

considered from the Muslim scholars and Pope Francis reframe how their respective religions can be resourceful, the texts placing readers in positions to confront this challenge. From her fieldwork, the difficulty is put plainly when Norgaard names the basic need for “positive self-identity.” As indicated above, in one sense, this extends beyond the construal of the challenge as a technical, economic, and political crisis to one that strikes radically at who we, as humans, are. Thus, the basic need for positive self-identity in the face of climate change, it is supposed, provides a significant facet of this crisis. And yet, at the same time, climate change forces reflection to account in some way for how we relate to humans elsewhere. As such, in addition to the material impact, climate change augurs the impending loss of a familiar world, and a cherished way of life; thus, there looms a real and potential source of spiritual and existential suffering.

The propensity for “climate change” to disrupt and derail ethical attention summons an ethical framework to account for such obstacles and their moral complexities. Social tendencies to construe climate change as a specific kind of challenge (e.g., narrowly political) might obscure some deeper issues that requires ethical attention. For instance, from a point-of-view of Christian virtue ethics, a danger that climate change poses is the temptation to “disinherit.”² Put simply, Christian practices of love and justice risk being non-intelligible in a world that is defined by anthropogenic climate change. In this manner, climate ethicists such as Willis Jenkins and others try to awaken public attention and alert theology to the habitual patterns of “self-endangerment,” a notion that Maria Antonaccio

² For similar point, see Willis Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 17. By “disinheritance,” he observes the propensity of the climate crisis to “generate problems that exceed our moral imagination and defeat our abilities to take responsibility.” For him, critically, the challenge “imperils” religions (and particularly Christianity) because humanity’s planetary power seems to “escape the bounds of justice and or make talk of loving neighbors unintelligible,” and so might disinherit Christians from “a way of being human.” While this chapter does not critique Jenkins’s ethical methodology, this approach indicates basic differences.

develops, arguing it is religious, moral, and cognitive in depth.³ How is it possible for Christians to exercise a sense of love and justice that addresses this need, while confronting core challenges of climate change, especially consumerist habits? If the active pursuit of virtues affords a more active approach, in a radical sense virtue ethics draws focus toward identity through four principal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance. These are the names of dispositions that, Thomas Aquinas teaches, act like “hinges,” thus lending their “cardinal” nature. In the context of climate change, however, challenges assume a different order. Put bluntly, from a virtue-based point-of-view, the question poses itself: if we knowingly disregard the urgent challenges of climate change in the practice of everyday life, who are we becoming? Or, constructively, in order to face the challenge of climate change who do we need to become? In this manner, let us examine how it might be possible to maintain a positive sense of self-identity in balance with real confrontations of consumerist habits and excessive desires.

A Delicate Balance: Human Greed, Climate Justice, and Temperance

Within this fragile space, thus, there is dire need for frank dialogues about human greed, planetary boundaries, and limits for human desires. If we take, again, the case of Bygdaby, we must note how often deeper reflection and self-examination is crucially lacking. As Norgaard tells us, symptomatically, the *Bygdabyingar* exhibit a strong tendency for “perspectival selectivity,” that is, the urge to shift and displace attention.⁴ In the view of the Norwegians who inform her fieldwork, for instance, “Amerika” is a favored

³ Maria Antonaccio, “Posthumanism and the Disabling of Human Moral Agency in the Anthropocene” (Paper presented at the “Ethics in the Anthropocene” panel, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, Nov. 23, 2019). For a possible influence, see Günther Thomas, “Human Personhood at the Edge of Life: Medical Anthropology and Theology in Dialogue,” in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Michael Welker, 370–94 (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2014). Her conception of “religious” adopts and modifies William Schweiker’s framework.

⁴ See Norgaard, *Living in Denial*, 163–70. For her most circumscribed discussion, see esp. 163.

target of this attention-shifting. For climate ethics, one may suppose, the decisive lesson would concern moral corruption. For others, alternatively, the assumption is drawn that this tendency is based in ignorance. However, as explicated in the first chapter, both stances seem to misread the body language and neglect the silent suffering in Bygdaby. Instead, as we discover, intensified consciousness around climate change and pained disquiet is what tacitly organizes their society.

Greed, according to Thomas Aquinas, is primarily an offense to justice. As he teaches in the *Summa theologiae*, greed is particularly apparent with a manifest inability to observe due proportions and appropriate limits. As such, greed indicates basic failure for humans to recognize what is due, not only to themselves but also to others. As a disposition, greed approves a habit of being that is steadfastly opposed to justice; as a corporate habit, this vice prevents moral agents from exercising more virtuous habits that dispose agents toward the common good. This notion is not foreign to the challenge that is expressed in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, when Pope Francis formulates this tension in terms of an educational task. Note, for instance, how “young people” are praised for the “new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit” and yet, simultaneously, they “have grown up in a milieu of extreme consumerism and affluence” (sec. 209). Likewise, broadly, the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change admonishes wanton consumerism, uttering concern for the inability to moderate and appreciate balance.

A virtue claim for practicing temperance, however, may be urged implicitly in a context of greed. Despite its prominence and privileged status in classic accounts of virtue ethics, in general, temperance has fallen into relative desuetude. Virtue-talk tends to avoid

it.⁵ Nonetheless, Rowan Williams insists, virtues are those special qualities that aid us in addressing “how we live humanly, how to live in such a way as to show that we understand and respect that we are only one species within creation.”⁶ Meanwhile, in turning to virtue thinking, the philosopher Dale Jamieson suggests that the qualities to meet the concrete problems of climate change probably are “not identical to classical or Christian virtues, but neither are they wholly novel.”⁷ For Jamieson, a middle course may be “rehabilitating” particular virtues. For example, he suggests, revising the moral virtue of temperance may serve a case-in-point of such a direction. Thus, he claims, whereas certain virtues such as humility should be promoted for conservation purposes, new ones such as “mindfulness” must be creatively developed. By contradistinction, in his view, a strategic use of temperance can reclaim “self-restraint and moderation” so ecological benefits of cultivating virtues “emphasizes the importance of reducing consumption.”⁸ With similar motivation, in a Thomistic perspective, Nicholas Austin promotes temperance, construing its material import broadly as “moderation for the sake of eco-justice.”⁹ In sum, addressing intemperate tendencies, links between justice and temperance must be strengthened.

⁵ This chapter highlights some whose theological perspectives advocate a similar point regarding temperance.

⁶ Rowan Williams, “How to Live as if We Were Human,” in *Citizen Ethics*, ed. Madeleine Bunting, 9–10, an online publication of the Citizens Ethics Network (2010), <https://www.barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Citizens-Ethics.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2019), as cited in Treanor, *Emplotting*, 19. For two representative views in this debate, see Martha Nussbaum, “Non-relative Virtues,” in *Moral Relativism: A Reader*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Thomas L. Carson, 199–225 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 181–225.

⁷ Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, cited at 8; see also 187. For a similarly Kantian premise regarding temperance, see Robert C. Roberts, “Temperance,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Stephen A. Boyd, 93–113 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 187. For what it is worth, revealingly, Jamieson’s pre-understanding of temperance is strikingly Kantian. This is clear when he explicates temperance as “long associated with the problem of *akrasia* and the incontinent agent” (*Ibid.*).

⁹ Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), cited at 3 n5, cf. Louke van Wenvse, “Attunement: An Ecological Spin on the Virtue of Temperance,” *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8, no. 2 (2001): 67–78. The contribution of van

Therefore, in the face of climate change, re-examination of temperance can benefit from virtue-rooted approaches that religious communities embody. The encyclical *Laudato si'*, as matter of fact, provides a virtue basis for rehabilitating temperance through a key of sobriety. In this sense, as Jamieson suggests, readers of the encyclical can appreciate ecological dimensions of learning sobriety as not wholly identical and yet not totally novel with respect to Thomistic sensibilities. For instance, just as Thomas's understanding, the ecological virtue of sobriety involves safeguarding reason from "inebriating" effects. Unlike Thomas, however, we must now expand material scope to account for historic changes in human agency, adjusting self-consciously human desires more ecologically within proper limits. As such, in a definitive sense, sobriety becomes a threefold virtue: a disposition capable of dealing with consumerist habits; a critical appreciation for revalorizing ecological relations by restoring a sense of agency; and a habit that enables and enacts "dispossession." To strengthen sobriety's link to justice, this chapter seeks to clarify its virtue foundations—and to show how, self-consciously, and selectively, we need exercise its expansion.

Turning to Islam, especially Ghazālī's account, temperance can directly address the challenges that are drafted above. Ghazālī promotes the disciplinary potential of temperance for virtue cultivation, thereby expanding its importance and enlarging its material scope. Alarming material concerns, due to the climate crisis, ought to connect how human impacts among more vulnerable communities ought to be a matter of virtue cultivation in contexts of relative power and privilege. As the chapter unfolds, accordingly,

Wensveen to the emergence of environmental virtue ethics is noted below. In chapter 4, I introduce how Catholic virtue ethicist Nancy Rourke creatively construes "attunement" as an ecological virtue ethic Thomistically as prudence, not temperance.

the Indonesian *eco-pesantren* shows key ecological shifts that practicing temperance can provide. For Muslim-Christian dialogue, the virtue of temperance offers both a necessary and a potentially fruitful framework. Explicitly, it must be argued, temperance serves civically as a *social* virtue to amplify its ecological benefits. Suspicious of its particularly “puritanical” misunderstanding in American society, this chapter sees as part of its task relativizing this cultural reaction, and thus to seek exemplars elsewhere. Through an exercise of comparative theology, I argue, a vision of climate justice requires a foundation for cultivating temperance, particularly as sobriety.

In this chapter, after briefly introducing the development of environmental virtue ethics as a sub-field of moral philosophy, the first task is to highlight methodologically how a case-based, virtue-rooted approach fits with broadening virtue cultivation ecologically, expressly in the name of “holistic thinking.” Addressing the basic need for positive self-identity and greed, due to a possible limit in Thomistic accounts of temperance, a fuller account of temperance’s role is given in Ghazālī’s approach than what Aquinas may be able to provide. In section 2, based on a literature review, the *eco-pesantren* movement is presented as a “reform project,” particularly Islamic in its motivations and temperate in its reasoning. For this context, the virtue lens that a Ghazalian perspective provides illuminates key turning points for understanding how temperance’s emergent role is inherently shaping this climate initiative. On this practical basis, in section 3, critical and constructive reflection into practicing temperance is situated to foster “holistic thinking,” a distinctly “ecological” virtue. Thus, with Indonesian deforestation in focus, by highlighting mutual dependency and implicating consumerist habits with that ecological “sin” a Ghazalian sense of temperance offers fuller understanding of this

virtue's multiple purpose according to potential stages of moderation, contentment, fulfillment, and renunciation. As such, for a Muslim-Christian virtue response, temperance may be potentially fruitful.

3.1. *Virtue Ethics, Ecology, and Grounding Theological Imagination*

With the resurgence of virtue ethics, the underlying question of flourishing and the “good life” has increasingly become a focal point in environmental virtue ethics. In their own distinct ways, as examined in the last chapter, Pope Francis and the Islamic scholars of the IDGCC exemplify this trend as their respective appraisals on climate change and the planetary situation can be received in keys of virtue. In climate ethics, this broader “virtue” turn indicates some advantages of such a framework. In addition to those introduced last chapter, a virtue-rooted ethic matters because social habits are addressed by and in lived communities of actual practice. Systematically, in this regard, Jean Porter would suggest virtue ethics is especially conducive for creating conditions of cultural change.¹⁰ Although some consider the sheer variety in virtue ethics to present a difficulty,¹¹ others regard this fact as opportune for revising conceptions of flourishing and, thus, a comparative theological perspective might become especially useful.¹²

The term ecology, since its coinage by Ernst Haeckel as a neologism in 1861, conveys numerous shades of meaning.¹³ It ranges from its originally descriptive sense

¹⁰ See Jean Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” in *Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill, 2nd ed., 87–102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹¹ For this acknowledgement in the philosophical sector, see Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89. For a similar point from a Thomist perspective, see Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 98–9.

¹² See, e.g., the following modern classics in religious ethics: Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990) and Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹³ For his neologism “Ökologie”, see Ernst Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie Der Organismen*, vol. 2 (1988; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

toward inherently normative uses that define ethical and political commitments. Of course, the original meaning remains the scientific discipline that empirically studies various fauna, flora, and organisms with respect to their biosphere. Beyond that, however, popular perceptions of the term can also enjoin a particular sort of “worldview,” typically understood in contrast to basic values that motivate capitalism and industrialism.¹⁴ Relatedly, but distinctly, this perception lends “ecology” a connotation of social activism that is directed to cultural change. In addition to these three uses, another way that ecology is signified is in consideration of profound interdependence. In this sense, primarily, Pope Francis addresses his encyclical to the ecological crisis. Conscious recognition of interdependence is, arguably, attributable to inherently religious perspectives and the social practices that shape them. Finally, according to Willis Jenkins, ecology might simply refer in a basic manner to the ways to organize “a materialist research frame for interpreting religious phenomena.”¹⁵ Concerning climate matters, thus, what virtue cultivation entails depends on the way that “ecology” organizes focus, method, and purpose of an approach.

For climate justice, as shall be examined, although temperance should become a crucial term, it also offers a case-in-point for the perils and promise of virtue language with respect to ecology and the climate crisis. On the one hand, in common parlance, the term is so privatized that it tends to lose any meaning, and yet the disposition can also establish vital preconditions to better apprehend climate justice. Generally, as pointed out,

¹⁴ The two works geared toward ecological issues, under the label of comparative theology, fall into this category. See Hyo-Dong Lee, *Spirit, Qi, and the Multitude: A Comparative Theology for the Democracy of Creation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014) and Daniel P. Scheid, *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)

¹⁵ This summary is indebted to the five ways that ecology organizes religious inquiry, as outlined in Willis Jenkins, “Whose Religion? Which Ecology? Religious Studies in the Environmental Humanities,” *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim (New York: Routledge, 2017), 22–32, esp. 28–31.

rehabilitating temperance needs the careful expansion of its material scope.¹⁶ With regards to learning virtues, Lee Yearley judges, the process of expansion is “relatively simple, even if the actual working out of any expansion often is complicated.” In this case, “expanding” temperance presumes the challenge to the commonplace usage of the term by way of a different virtue foundation, such as Thomas’s account. Moreover, as we shall attempt, it even attributes a fuller role for the virtue in question. In the case of Thomas, temperance is relatively restricted according to its “material causes,” that is, the sphere of its material object. In this sense, we shall seek to expand temperance beyond the classic definition that Thomas provides to render the meaning of temperance ecological. In this direction, drawing from Ghazālī’s classic account, temperance gains practical traction that helps extend it beyond narrower “puritanical” conceptions. For climate ethics, these lessons can reform temperance, specifically the sense of sobriety that Pope Francis articulates, and potentially recover salutary lessons that its renunciatory spirit imparts.

Grounding ethical perspectives, however, climate ethics must exercise holistic thinking, especially by way of bringing attention to cases of cultural change in service of what Pope Francis calls a “new ecological culture.” In *Laudato si’*, as mentioned, this basic aim is outlined as “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (sec. 111). In a spiritual sense, his approach fits loosely with the ecocritic Timothy Morton’s understanding of “ecological thinking” as the work of not only “connecting the dots” but also aiming at “*knowing* something or other in

¹⁶ For the delineation of various steps in “expansion” as a type of virtue learning, see Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, 17, 19.

particular.”¹⁷ To be clear, this aim does not focus theological attention toward reified categories like “Nature,” but instead for the sake of greater familiarity with “strange strangers,” those creatures with whom humans find themselves enmeshed. In this vein, we seek to render holistic thinking useful for virtue ethics.

3.1.1. *Lessons from Environmental Virtue Ethics*

In various ways, the developing sub-field of environmental virtue ethics has shown why character matters for ecological concerns. In particular, the practical guidance of a virtue-based approach is helpful for the unsettling complexities of many environmental situations. From a philosophical orientation, as environmental ethicist Ronald Sandler details, four different strategies are commonly followed: first, to select familiar virtues and simply to “extend” them in an ecological direction; second, with focus on a singular figure, to depend on those traits and characteristics that one exhibited in a truly ecological person; third, to explicate a characteristic as an “environmental virtue” inasmuch as an agent is enriched; and fourth, to assert that ecological characteristics are constitutive of “natural goodness.”¹⁸ According to Sandler, these are divisible as four separate conceptual strategies, and outline how both philosophical and theological orientations could orient their approaches to the field.

Highlighting a distinct advantage of virtue ethics, philosopher Brian Treanor recognizes a fifth strategy: a narrative approach. Virtue ethics must not forget the centrality of narrative, he argues, writing: “narrative proves indispensable for understanding self-

¹⁷ Morton, *Ecological Thought*, 15. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁸ Ronald Sandler attempts to delineate these four philosophical strategies, cf. *Character and Environment: A Virtue-oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9–14. For a critical appraisal of this typology, see Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue: A Narrative Approach to Environmental Virtue Ethics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 39–40.

identity and, therefore, for understanding self-transformation, the process by which someone becomes a new person, as when one strives to become virtuous.”¹⁹ On this point, whereas in the last chapter we concluded how religious perspectives supply communal narratives that stimulate and support ecological conversion, similarly, case-based methods also provide narrative means for illustrating cultural change with special reference to those who set examples in more ordinary and practical ways. More holistically, in short, exemplary movements help shape the future we wish to inhabit.

3.1.1.1. *Challenges and Constraints of Virtue Ethics*

Developing virtues for concrete problems in climate ethics, however, is not without possible constraints and challenges. First, there is the sheer diversity of forms, approaches, and purposes of virtue ethics. Secondly, beyond moral and religious diversity, exponents of virtue ethics even acknowledge that classic accounts barely offer more than vague awareness of wider ecological relations. Traditionally speaking, in other words, the ecological benefits of virtue development are far from clear. Rarely are they elaborated. For skeptics of virtue ethics, moreover, the conceptual commitment to the human agent may increase the probability of disregarding the complexion of ecological problems. For climate ethics specifically, third of all, the impulse toward excessive theorization of virtue might so preoccupy and exhaust attention that the practical guidance and motivation that virtue ethics furnishes is effectively negated.

Nonetheless, it may be argued, framing ecological virtues as constitutive of a “good life” can indicate how the practice of everyday life matters for an ethical response to

¹⁹ Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue*, cited at 106, see also 138, 180. For environmental virtue ethics, this reflects the core of his main argument in this work.

climate change. For this reason, virtue ethics is distinguishable especially for how it incorporates rather quotidian concerns into its ethical approach.²⁰ To this end, Treanor suggests, engaging difference might actually become productive insofar as agents are stimulated to reconsider why their background narratives are plausible.²¹ Thus, along these lines, a comparative framework anchors reflection, provides structured modes of questioning and assesses the climate crisis in light of normative commitments that shape and define religious identities.

3.1.1.2. *At the Limits of Aquinas? A Brief Examination of Temperance*

A significant asset, in this way, that theology can contribute is its contextual perspective. This is evident, of course, with respect to “reform projects” and also “canonical” perspectives that shape both the basic and ultimate horizon of virtues within actual communities of practice. Now, both Thomas Aquinas and Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī think temperance should be understood as a virtue in the “general” sense. Put differently, temperance is apparent whenever moderation is exhibited in action. In such a manner, thus, temperance satisfactorily mediates competing desires that would distract from the higher good, whether this can be construed as personal enrichment, the common good, or even union with God. Therefore, the possibility of practicing temperance is potentially relevant

²⁰ For a similar point, see Ronald Sandler, “Environmental Virtue Ethics: Value, Normativity, and Right Action,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner and Allen Thompson, 223–33 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²¹ For a recurring notion on the role of alterity in narrative engagement and developing ecological virtue, see Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue*, 91–3, 99–107, esp. 106, and 143–4, when he formulates his most explicitly committed stance in a Ricoeurian key: “Engaging otherness in the form of other narratives will, again, force us to clarify why one account is more plausible than another; it will also open us to novel perspectives detailing alternative, perhaps more plausible, accounts of virtue and flourishing.”

in all actions and so theoretically at least, Diana Fritz Cates determines, “provides plenty of opportunity for practice.”²²

According to Thomas Aquinas, as temperance represents a virtue in a general sense of moderation, its special character is manifest wherever desires, sensations, and appetitive attraction is properly ordered. What does temperance do? In keeping with Aristotle’s approach to temperance, the special mode of temperance is especially concerned with attractive powers that obstruct deliberation of reason, pertaining specifically to the subjects of food, drink, and sex. These areas of concern, definitively, are what Thomas deems “material” causes of temperance. As “carnal” pleasures, based on touch (*tactu*), these three issues are regarded by Thomas as a distinct sphere of concern. Accordingly, in this manner, Aquinas identifies temperance as a special virtue that in purpose is manifold insofar as it encompasses various “subjective” ways that correspond with especially problematic “subject matters.” Exercising sobriety, for instance, concerns a moderating appreciation of alcohol. For Thomas, such domains become problematic when actions are under the influence of either excessive influence or even insensible refusal.

For the basic issue of positive self-identity, in the context of the climate crisis, Thomistic theological anthropology may be surprisingly resourceful. Previous obscured, the importance of affect or the “emotions” provides a critical basis for Thomistic reflection. Cates, for example, construes emotions Thomistically as a “mode of tending” such that a person can either tend *toward* or *away from* something that she apprehends.²³ For many,

²² Diana Fritz Cates, “The Virtue of Temperance (IIa IIae, qq. 141–170),” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, 321–39 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002); for this concluding comment, see 334.

²³ See Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009) 130–33, cited at 131.

the idea of “climate change” tends to instill a sense of distancing ethical attention. In the case of Bygdaby, Norgaard refers to this tendency as “perspectival selectivity,” the habit that uses specific narratives to either name a worse offender to whom blame ought to be assigned or to deflect responsibility and negotiate relative innocence. Norway as the “little land,” for instance, protects a sense of Norwegians as a nature-loving people whose rate of emissions relatively speaking is miniscule compared to the United States. In this context, practicing temperance might function to create different responses.

For Thomas, following Aristotle, the virtue of temperance serves a “special” role in the manner it moderates and orders appetitive desires in accord with reason. Just as fortitude addresses those powers that compel an agent to withdraw, temperance begins in addressing those attractive pleasures. In a Thomistic view, a defining feature of temperance is “appropriateness” or “fittingness.” As such, this disposition lends aesthetic appreciation for particular situations. This harmonized and fulfilled quality of affect, according to Nicholas Austin, provides an avenue into understanding how to acquire Thomas’s moral virtue.²⁴ Consider Austin’s causal definition:

Nothing more than the habit that (i) harmoniously modulates (ii) the passions of attraction and their corresponding actions, sometimes (ia) by restraint, sometimes (ib) by positive channeling; orders (iii) the concupiscible appetite in order to meet (iv) what is needed to live a fitting bodily, relational, and moral life (v) with a view to the overall end of human life; and which (vi) comes about through virtuous practices of fasting and feasting and through grace, (vii) thereby following, dying, and rising with Christ.²⁵

²⁴ This refers to formal, material, final, and efficient causality for acquiring a moral virtue. For such a causal reading of temperance, see Austin, “Defining Temperance Causally,” ch. 1 in *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 3–22; *ST Ia IIae* q61a2, *ST IIa IIae* q141, q143, q155, q163.

²⁵ Austin, “Defining Temperance Causally,” 19. The Roman numerals are in the original, indicating the various “causes” within Thomistic virtue theory; it exceeds the scope of this exercise to explain further.

In this manner, Austin explains, becoming temperate effectively helps to understand personal identity and, subsequently, sense of purpose precisely with respect to what “fits” circumstances. For Thomas, the two key activities of temperance are (1) restraint and (2) proper channeling of “passions,” without which a Christian vision of flourishing is incomplete. What might this say to climate ethics, and how we are shaping ourselves?

The shift from “perspectival selectivity” to holistic thinking will not come easily unless there is an apprehension that reveals how the eudaimonistic search for happiness of one’s own community is connected, inextricably, to ecological well-being. Highlighting interconnections and elucidating habits considering environmental degradation, in other words, begin through being committed to justice. While ecological benefits of practicing temperance will remain unclear, for the sake of the common good, practicing temperance adaptively might seek specific ways to reasonably limit unbridled enjoyment. In the Thomistic account of temperance, as noted, the way that temperance is defined *materially* according to three classic concerns for the “concupiscible appetite” of food, drink, and sex may impose a significant barrier. For Catholic virtue ethics, alternatively, Franciscan strains have emerged that explicitly describe a dimension of Christian flourishing regarding virtuous relations with creation and material goods. Drawing from Bonaventure, for example, Dawn Nothwehr promotes a virtuous sense of “poverty of spirit.” Following Leonardo Boff, she indicates how for Franciscan sensibilities the key is “being receptive to God’s gifts while not *possessing* them.”²⁶ For Boff himself, St. Francis of Assisi exemplifies this habitual stance that reflects a “practice of essential poverty.” As synonymous with humility, relationally, Boff proposes the habit evinces “an attitude by

²⁶ Dawn Nothwehr, “Bonaventure’s Franciscan Christology: A Resource for Eco-Conversion toward Halting Human-Forced Climate Change,” in Schaefer, *Confronting the Climate Crisis*, 101–24, esp. 112–3.

which we stand on the ground alongside *things*.”²⁷ Addressing technocratic and consumerist habits, in the encyclical, Pope Francis urges the need to develop a similar sensibility, namely sobriety as an “ecological virtue.” Although Austin promotes a Thomistic sense of temperance, notably, he also suggests how Thomas’s account materially confines temperance. “In a consumer society,” he explicitly acknowledges, “temperance is needed to moderate the impulse toward consumption.”²⁸ Thomas may not be able to provide the sort of temperance that is needed in the face of the climate crisis.

3.1.1.3. *Holistic Thinking as an Ecological “Virtue”*

From the standpoint of Thomistic virtue ethics, rehabilitating temperance must start not only with self-consciously examining ecological benefits, but also widening material scope. In this vein toward rehabilitating temperance, virtue ethics must show how this virtue operates when it is embedded ecologically and in a culturally specific way of life. Relatedly, expanding temperance in this manner might account for interconnected dynamics of human agency.

Consider, by way of contrast, how temperance commonly leaves an impression of a moral virtue that has “puritanical” proclivities, that is, confined to strictly private affairs. Brian Treanor typifies this tendency when he nominates temperance as a quintessentially “individual” virtue, while dividing his conceptual typology into social and ecological virtues. For him, distinct categorically from social and environmental virtue, temperance

²⁷ Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 215–6, see also 203. Emphasis mine. This is also thematized as the “companionship” motif, in opposition to more dominating habits, see Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 109–12.

²⁸ Austin, *Defining Virtue Causally*, 3, see fn8 in this chapter. Austin relies on van Wensveen’s article to allude to the ecological implications, citing her article on five different occasions. See also Stephen J. Pope, *Steps along the Way: Christian Models of Service* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 100–3.

as a particularly moral virtue is individual “because its main concern is with properly regulating one’s appetites.” However, as Treanor is acutely aware, the purview of virtue ethics usually is far more expansive and must relate a person’s own flourishing and personal good to the general well-being of the *polis*. Thus, in accord, should temperance not be understood in more social manner? Are “appetites” merely individual? Could we not also address “spiritual” effects of the desires of others, and the impact that bears upon the shape of one’s own desires? Materially, in this way, how do the desires of others affect our own desires?

As valid as these questions are, the principal question that primarily determines climate ethics regards a burgeoning sense of holistic thinking. At first, this notion may appear abstract; however, within climate ethics, reflecting on interconnection itself may foster quite concrete avenues for relating between different cultural contexts, visions of flourishing, and biospheres. As a common term in environmentalist literature, in short, “holistic thinking” refers to the human capacity for recognizing interconnections, while appreciating mutual dependency.²⁹ For practical reason, virtue ethics might nurture and incorporate this disposition to foster a critical skill into an appreciation for the ecological benefits of cultivating particular virtues, such as temperance. According to Treanor, conceptually, holistic thinking quintessentially acts as an ecological virtue since this way of thinking properly disposes agents toward promoting the integral well-being of the

²⁹ For a theological proposal that approximates this sense of holistic thinking, see William French, “On Knowing Oneself in an Age of Ecological Concern,” in Schaefer, *Confronting the Climate Crisis*, 145–76. In this domain, he identifies the task of prudence to be the willful effort to learn the internal and external “costs” of anthropogenic climate crisis. For a magisterial document, although dated, see U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001).

biosphere, and one's role in it implicitly.³⁰ In addressing concerned ecological agents, in other words, virtue ethics ought to be adapted and supplemented in ways that exercise a proper sense of holistic thinking.

Concerning the climate crisis, as a particular intellectual habit, holistic thinking promotes ecological flourishing. In this regard, instructively, Treanor instructs how to find the mean for holistic thinking. "Too little holistic thinking," he suggests, tends to become subject to either abstraction or narrowness of concern. For example, the 2015 Paris Agreement fails to offer a holistic sense of the human impact of climate change, particularly marginalizing the poor and vulnerable. In such cases, holistic thinking is merely a speculative form of environmentalism "that thinks holistically but lacks any deep connection with or concern for particular places and specific beings."³¹ Holistic thinking, thus, can be unbalanced if it lacks focus toward concrete particularities. By contradistinction, holistic thinking is possible if ethical attention regarding climate change become localized and indicates specifically ways that enmesh "human ecology" more fully with the biosphere. With a virtue "hermeneutic," skillful adaptation of a concept such as holistic thinking can be useful, in supplementary or auxiliary ways, to avoid extremes that

³⁰ The key shift in an ecological orientation according to Louke van Wensveen is toward "relational or holistic" modes, and he names "allied resistance" and "attentive care" as virtuous attitudes; see *Dirty Virtues: The Emergence of Environmental Virtue Ethics* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 15, 13, cf. Marti Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). The most prominent exponent of this style of environmentalist thought, who van Wensveen cites, is Murray Bookchin, cf. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982). For a Catholic theologian who comes close, and who van Wensveen also critiques, one may refer to the so-called "geologist" Thomas Berry.

³¹ Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue*, 59–62, cited at 60. According to van Wensveen, "holism" can be summarized as "a paradigm in which everything exists in relation to everything else," cf. *Dirty Virtues*, 24. As for van Wensveen, she acknowledges variety between "strong" and "weak" forms, and "hierarchical" and "egalitarian" on another axis.

vitiating. In short, rehabilitating temperance will need a narrative approach to learn who we are by way of illustrating how we are interconnected.

3.1.2. *Virtues in Context: Thomas and Ghazālī in Comparative Perspective*

To dialogue on temperance might serve as a productive way to curb “ontological” insecurities that underlie basic needs for positive self-identity. The prevailing sentiment that temperance, and even the pursuit of virtues in general, is a matter of preference seems to be a profoundly American position. Turning to classic virtue accounts can disabuse such troublesome notions and, moreover, elucidate how virtue operates in other contexts, as we shall see in the *eco-pesantren* movement. By sharpening the virtue focus in terms of systematic functionality, furthermore, this section aims to show how Ghazālī’s virtue foundation might contribute a different perspective on temperance in response to climate change.³² Here, we pair Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* with Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī’s virtue hermeneutic as particularly encapsulated in his treatise *Mīzān al-‘amal* (“Criterion of action”), and elaborated in the voluminous *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (“Revivification of the religious sciences”).

3.1.2.1. *Introducing Thomas and Ghazālī: What Does It Mean to Be Ethical?*

For those in Muslim-Christian studies, the association of Thomas Aquinas and Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī is not out-of-the-ordinary. Comparative interests, first, tend to begin by recognizing in such figures the resemblance of stature within their respective religious traditions, as well as their enduring relevance.³³ It is also possible to gain insight from the

³² Such explication seems necessary because some may suppose that comparative theological endeavors in the domain of climate ethics is a “folly.” That predisposition, in short, considers any such foray to likely be more harmful than beneficial.

³³ See, e.g., Georges C. Anawati, O.P., “Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism,” in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Joseph Schacht, Clifford E. Bosworth, and Thomas Walker Arnold, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

way they, as counterparts, have worked on similar topics. For some, Thomas Aquinas is a “working example” of comparative religious ethics as he engaged Arab Muslim and Jewish sources to form and clarify his own particularly Christian understanding. As it happens, it is possible to interpret his virtue ethics as a result of inter-development with Muslim thinkers.³⁴ While theological scholarship, on the one hand, has explored the influence of Ibn Sīnā’s conception of the soul on Thomas Aquinas as well as his reverential mention of Ibn Rushd as the “Commentator,” on the other, the basic notion of “refining” character may have earlier inspired Muslim exponents of virtue ethics from their Christian precursors.³⁵ As for Ghazālī in particular, within a treatise on truth and virtue, Aquinas mentions him by name on several occasions.³⁶

A second comparative approach is permitted because these two figures depend upon a shared philosophical inheritance, which is adopted and subsequently transformed. For theological purposes, David Burrell exemplifies a constructive way of engaging Thomas with Ghazālī, casting such reflections upon divine attributes, agency and freedom as a “medieval crucible of exchange.”³⁷ But relatively few have attended to the fact that

³⁴ This may qualify as a historical model of comparative theology that situates the approach based on mutual or inter-development, cf. John Renard, “Comparative Theology: Definition and Method,” *Religious Studies and Theology* 17, no. 1 (1998): 3–18. This mode typifies acts of comparison regarding Thomas Aquinas and Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī and includes a dimension of the foundational character of David Burrell’s approach (see below).

³⁵ Sidney H. Griffith, “Yahyā ibn ‘Adī’s (d.974), *Kitāb Tahdīb al-Akhlāq*,” in *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled el-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), cf. Mohammed Arkoun, *Traité éthique: Tahdīb al-ahlāq wa tathīr al-‘arāq*, 2nd ed. (1969; Paris: Vrin, 2010). The former regards a Christian philosopher, whose approach is apparent in the Muslim virtue ethicist, Ibn Miskawayh, whose work of the same name is of seminal influence on Ghazālī’s elaboration of virtue ethics.

³⁶ This fact is surprisingly absent in David Decosimo, *Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 34–6.

³⁷ David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sina, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1986), 2; also, idem, “The Unknowability of God in al-Ghazali,” *Religious Studies* 23, no. 2 (1987): 171–82. Burrell raises major topics for comparative theological reflection and inquiry; however, he tends to avoid a virtue focus to his comparative endeavor—although this can be read as an underlying question of his writings. His interests, instead, are meta-ethical; I also have reservations about his premise that characterizes this historical period as a “crucible of exchange,” because it is decidedly *unilateral* (that is, Europeans reading Arabic translations).

both figures use the same four principal virtues, namely practical wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, for organizing the basis of the ethical life.³⁸ As typical of classical virtue ethics, both absorb Platonic divisions of the soul into the passions, irascible and concupiscible, as well as the rational faculty, but slightly different roles are assigned to each of these moral virtues.³⁹ Still, as theological thinkers, both expand consideration of virtues to include more religious sensibilities, particularly the more fundamental role of divine agency. A comparative perspective, as exhibited in the exercise of chapter 4, can illumine how these understandings inform moral agency.

Their eudaimonistic outlook, third of all, lends another possible point of comparative focus. As critical for learning virtues, methodically, each figure examines and deepens reflection of a human life from a particularly eudaimonistic basis of flourishing. In accordance, instead of rules, principles, or duties, each employs virtue keys for elaborating their visions of flourishing. In this manner, the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean is observed, playing a vital role in their articulation of virtue meanings of “flourishing” as the goal of human life, as particularly evident in *Summa theologiae* and *Mīzān al-‘amal*, especially the pivotal fourteenth chapter.

For acquiring virtues, thus, both articulate a dynamic process of habituation. According to Aquinas, virtue is a habituated disposition (*habitus*) of a person’s character such that as an agent the person is disposed to perform an action well. For Thomas, the “cardinal” quality of the moral virtues is such that they provide the “hinges” for the other virtues to thrive. As for Ghazālī, on the other hand, the fundamental understanding of the

³⁸ In my research, I have found one exception with these comparative foci: Frederick S. Carney, “Some Aspects of Islamic Ethics,” *The Journal of Religion* 63, no. 2 (1983): 159–74, esp. 160, 168–72.

³⁹ Plato, *Republic* 4:440–2, 10:579–80.

nature of these virtues is as “motherly” (*ummahāt*).⁴⁰ In a maternal sense, principal virtues nurture and serve others as preconditions “from which actions proceed easily without any need for thinking or forethought.”⁴¹ A Thomistic view modifies virtue to mean a “good quality of mind, by which we live rightly, of which no one use makes bad use, which God works in us without us.”⁴² So, too, according to Ghazālī, despite insufficiencies of an Aristotelian view of human virtues, it is relatable to both outward and inward expression of the agent. In this manner, virtuous actions engender a certain “pleasing” and “praiseworthy” effects in its performance; by contrast, an action contrary to virtue can be construed as “painful.” Broadly, nevertheless, both indicate that cultivating virtues somehow enables persons as moral agents to undertake such challenging endeavors.⁴³ In common, the basis and aims of their theological anthropologies are offered in virtue keys.⁴⁴

In any case, crucially, temperance affirms a constructive dynamic of habituation. For climate ethics, decisively, these possible contributions may be useful and are worth highlighting. Let us examine Ghazālī’s view of temperance, with special reference to three distinct aspects, namely: temperance’s primacy, how it matters more widely, and its multiple “stages.”

⁴⁰ According to Mohammed Sherif, direct influence is al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *al-Dharī‘ah ilā Makārim al-Sharī‘ah* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Watan, 1299/1882). See *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), 24 n1.

⁴¹ See *Ihyā’* III.2. Translated in *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul*, 19, with historical context in n19.

⁴² *ST Ia IIae* q55 a4.

⁴³ This specific lens defines the comparative focus of this dissertation’s approach. Formally, it may be classified in terms of the functional similarity of virtue within the theological anthropologies of Thomas Aquinas and Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, particularly the *Summa theologiae* and *Mizān al-‘amal*—and only later the *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*.

⁴⁴ For Aquinas, see Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Thomas Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1990). For Ghazālī, see Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory*, Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: n.p., 1975), esp. 79–104, Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), esp. 193–206, and Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 208–36.

3.1.3. *Temperance in Ghazālī*

Key differences between the virtue ethics of Aquinas and Ghazālī are perhaps never more manifest than in what Thomas identifies as the “exemplary” manner for learning virtues. From a Thomistic viewpoint, moral virtues are fulfilled in an unsurpassable way in the example that the person of Jesus Christ imparts. Distinctive sources of Islamic understanding, with Quranic roots and further defined according to the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, may also elucidate the distinctly incarnational orientation of Thomas’s virtue ethics.⁴⁵ Borrowing Thomas’s categories, in this sense, the final “cause” refers to the ultimate reason toward which human actions are performed. In this regard, ultimately, Ghazālī also imagines the purpose of virtues are most aptly oriented toward an eschatological encounter with God. Although the key final “means” for understanding temperance differ, in an analogous way, approaching the virtue theologically reaffirms progressively those who are seeking a transcendent God.

Key differences also pertain to diverging methods and styles in their virtue ethics.⁴⁶ For Ghazālī, primarily, temperance is a virtue that can be measured and exercised according to reason alone. Simply, temperance is a disposition that begins with reflection, watchful of urges and desires. From a Thomistic perspective, while both the scope and structure of temperance is determined according to the material concerns of food, drink, and sex, in a further sense, its relative role is diminished with respect to the other principal virtues of prudence, justice, and fortitude. In accord, temperance functions solely to bring attracting powers of these appetitive desires into conformity with reason. However, this

⁴⁵ For an important Quranic basis, see Q 68:4.

⁴⁶ For summary description of the “motherly” virtues, in Ghazālī, see *Ihyā’* 22.2, cf. *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul*, trans. T. J. Winter, 15–23.

understanding constrains potential ways that temperance can shape virtue responses. For Ghazālī, on the other hand, cultivating virtues is primarily concerned with shaping more fully appetitive desires through crucial focus to those social practices that habituate proper dispositions. Indeed, he affirms, temperance is measured according to forms of law (*sharī‘ah*), but through the body particular kinds of wisdom are gained according to rigorous pursuance of God. For Ghazālī, a desire to become proximate to God is intelligible and possible through human reason. Practically, temperance remains mindful of how bodily desires can tempt and mislead. As a moderating influence, broadly, practicing temperance seeks to attain a moral equilibrium in all matters. As a corporate endeavor, Ghazālī suggests, the practice of temperance also assesses how the desire for food is connected to keeping bodies alive and senses alert and healthy to be properly oriented to ultimate purposes.⁴⁷ Simply, some desires can distract, and deter. Just as a visually impaired person knows his disability, Ghazālī explains, a temperate person understands the need to find a guide.⁴⁸

3.1.3.1. *Primacy of Temperance? A Training Ground for Cultivating Virtue*

As encapsulated in *Mīzān al-‘amal*, Ghazālī assigns temperance a primary role in virtue cultivation. In his later writings of the *Ihyā’*, Ghazālī elaborates its practical importance from the definitive sense that temperance is that stable disposition of character that reflects “disciplining” of the appetitive desires under commands of “intellectual reason” and revealed law (*sharī‘ah*).⁴⁹ Furthermore, a fuller meaning of temperance is

⁴⁷ For more on these points, see Elizabeth M. Bucar, “Islam and the Cultivation of Character: Ibn Miskawayh’s Synthesis and the Case of the Veil,” in Snow, *Cultivating Virtue*, 197–226. From Ibn Miskawayh’s *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, Bucar identifies three basic “tenets” of Islamic virtue ethics, namely, the centrality of bodily practices, the habituation of sexual appetites, and the social dimensions of virtue.

⁴⁸ For this analogy, see *MA*. XVII, 145.

⁴⁹ This twofold basis is explicated in *MA*. XVII.107. For the fuller elaboration, see *Ihyā’* 22.2.

“expanded” when the mystical states such as poverty and “renunciation” materialize. To be discussed, Ghazālī’s transformative pedagogy reflects this developmental perspective of temperance, providing explicit motivation for all practices that habituate agents to turn away from what is *not* of ultimate significance.

For Ghazālī, “training” (*riyādah*) characterizes the expansive process of virtue cultivation. Accordingly, in principle, Ghazalian temperance diverts from an Aristotelian understanding to direct the practice of temperance beyond classic appetitive concerns. Aquinas and Ghazālī both suppose virtue cultivation as a matter of habituation. Like Aquinas, Ghazālī perceives a virtue to be both “stable” and “facile” as though “second nature” according to the character of an agent. Unlike Aquinas, acknowledging struggle against wider appetitive desires and passions, Ghazālī emphasizes how spiritual discipline in terms of “training” (*riyādah*) affects how desires are transformed. Practicing temperance, thus, seeks concrete ways to “refrain” from destructive acts, and to strengthen commitments to enact “beautifying” character more easily. All humans, except prophets, need to be raised by degree to God. According to Ghazālī, practicing temperance should concern not only basic human appetites, but also “possessions, position, and the love of praise.”⁵⁰ Temperance, thus, according to Ghazālī re-shapes desire through communal practices that mediate excessive urges and greed, neither succumbing to temptations nor misguided aims to extinguish desire altogether.

3.1.3.2. Materiality of Temperance: Widened Scope for Practicing Temperance

For Ghazālī, learning temperance begins with “modesty” (*hayā*). In *Mīzān al-‘amal*, he asserts, modesty is a virtuous fear of shortcomings. In a social way, modesty

⁵⁰ See *MA*. XVII.116.

disposes one to examine one's own deficiencies—and “repugnant” acts”—while also in the presence of others to recognize their virtues. Initially, according to Ghazālī, this accepts a sense of “shame-facedness” (*khajal*), that is sensitive to imperfections and yet also is not reserved when truths are revealed.⁵¹ In this sense, Ghazalian temperance connotes refraining from what is unlawful, but also extends beyond that. When one commits a mistake, those actions upon reflection are “painful” so that a sense of disgrace before God prompts rectification and improvement. According to Ghazālī, this practical emphasis on vigilance and judgment becomes an actual basis to remove characteristic vices, such as gluttony, from which he believes all evils originate.

Later, in response to such “destructive” propensities as elaborated in the *Ihyā'*, Ghazālī casts temperance into its primarily practical role.⁵² This starting-point decisively prioritizes praxis in the way he presents temperance.⁵³ Bear in mind that, according to Thomas Aquinas, the material cause of pursuing temperance is related to “material” concerns and their sensible use. By contrast, according to Ghazālī, practicing temperance exceeds these material concerns, and encompasses wealth and possessions. The widened sense of temperance's material scope and purpose diverges starkly with the Thomistic usage, in which such practical considerations are diminished to secondary concern. In this material domain, Thomas considers less urgent “potential” parts of temperance. More

⁵¹ For Thomas, modesty is subordinate as a “potential” virtue of temperance, and he identifies “honesty” as the counterpart to “shame-facedness,” cf. *ST* IIa IIae qq.144–5. Both depart from Aristotle's impression of modesty's ultimate importance.

⁵² Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, *On Disciplining the Soul & On Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of The Revival of the Religious Sciences* = *Kitāb riyādat al-naḥs*, & *Kitāb kaṣr al-shahwatayn: Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, trans. Tim J. Winter (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Text Society, 1995).

⁵³ For a similar Thomist perspective, see David C. Burrell, “Philosophical Sources for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims,” *Forum Bosnae* no. 44 (2008): 60–1.

integrally, however, the potential problem of wealth according to Ghazālī, especially how it is acquired, generated, and used implicates temperance.

The virtue of “liberality” (*sakhāʾ*), for example, falls within the ambit of temperance in Ghazālī’s perspective.⁵⁴ By contrast to Aquinas, Ghazālī considers disinterested attitudes toward material possessions and wealth not to be governed as a matter of distributive justice; rather, it is a question that qualifies human freedom. Regarding wealth, in observance of the mean, being virtuous means neither being profligate in spending (*tabdhīr*) nor being miserly in a greedy way. In addition, summarily, he judges it should also characterize someone who not only gives freely but also who avoids acquiring anything “unduly.”⁵⁵ In *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, Ghazālī does not parse further intricate meanings of how to acquire basic senses of temperance. The distillation of his treatment is another indication of his determination to claim a wider purpose for practicing temperance. Even in “piety” (*taqwāʾ*), he claims, temperance performs the key role for training the self (*nafs*) to “beautify” through good, righteous actions in pursuance of a fuller sense of self, thus drawing near to God “without hypocrisy and vainglorious repute.”⁵⁶ The fact that he explicitly sees no reason to “prolong” with excessive detail underscores his assumption that what temperance means depends on circumstances and practical settings.

Becoming generous, furthermore, points toward how fundamentally practicing temperance involves a more corporate dimension. In the *Ihyāʾ*, although he elaborates a wider scope for practicing temperance, Ghazālī advises food and sex as the “starting point” for training temperance. At a critical juncture, Ghazālī prescribes proper use of food so that

⁵⁴ In this, Ghazālī seems to be partially following Ibn Sīnā. Cp. Thomas who annexes “liberality” as a part of justice (*ST* IIa IIae qq.117–9).

⁵⁵ See *MA*. XX, 25.

⁵⁶ *MA*. XX, 38.

seekers can favor acquiring knowledge and performing good deeds; thus, to draw near to God, food replenishes for fuller service. In this regard, he emphasizes how communal context shapes virtue responses. In the holy month of Ramadan, for example, corporate fasting (*sawm*) determines how Muslims exercise restraint, becoming inclined toward moderation through absence by withholding from basic pleasures from dawn until sunset. If the goal of moral training and spiritual growth is to bring the soul back to health and balance, finding the mean is inextricably a communal task. As with food, concerning, Ghazālī admonishes seekers in kind to shield themselves against the “desire of the stomach” so as not to indulge greed and base desires. On the other hand, practicing temperance also performs a “dissociative” role in Ghazālī’s virtue ethics. For his students, at various points, Ghazālī prescribes that those who are seeking to practice temperance ought to observe the habits of others in their society, evaluating and assuming those habits as one’s own.⁵⁷ By extension, concerning matters of wealth, the “stomach” is the basic wellspring for other destructive desires.⁵⁸ As such, Ghazālī contributes an acute sense of what is morally considerable for practicing temperance. For climate ethics, this enlarged scope is especially necessary for rehabilitating temperance.⁵⁹

3.1.3.3. *Acquiring Virtue as Developmental: Traversing Stations and Stages*

By Ghazālī’s account, the sort of training that habituation requires is elaborated more fully according to a developmental perspective. Not only is the material scope of temperance significantly enlarged, but it is also potentially “boundless.”⁶⁰ As dramatically

⁵⁷ The general question regarding the relation between virtue and law cannot be taken up here.

⁵⁸ This becomes explicit in *Ihyā’* III.3.1, cf. *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul*, 106–7.

⁵⁹ Cp. more circumscribed sense of Thomas’s inquiry into temperance and material goods in *ST* IIa IIae qq. 168–9.

⁶⁰ This is the concluding note of *MA*. XX, 105.

unfolded in the *Ihyā'*, Ghazālī envisions a “path” for aspiring seekers to undertake.⁶¹ “Training” dispositions, in accord, spans these multiple stages (*maqāmāt*) and, correspondingly, various spiritual states (*ahwāl*) that prepare certain dispositions for the journey to draw near to God. Drawn from Sufī teachings, this developmental viewpoint is oriented to a deeper desire and an impassioned love that motivates drawing near to God. As such, in a sense, desire becomes transformed. For Ghazālī, “mystical” states of knowing bring seekers toward enacting inward dispositions that verify deeper religious truths. Depending on more than human reason alone, according to Ghazālī, gradual development of temperance is enabled as one experiences a “contraction and expansion of desire.”⁶² In this way, temperance begins to encompass a more comprehensive concern for material relations, especially greed, incorporating virtue reflection in the practice of everyday life.

3.1.4. Why? Toward Learning Temperance Otherwise

Let us reiterate: for the sake of climate justice, how does one address the need for positive self-identity and yet account for the obvious and real challenge of human greed? This question is reiterated, here, to underscore the point that holistic thinking becomes imbalanced without special consideration to the Earth itself and how we are interconnected. In light of Ghazālī, the *eco-pesantren* movement demonstrates a particular discipline for practicing temperance. In response to climate change, and especially combatting deforestation, these sites of Islamic schooling are setting out to reform habits and redefine

⁶¹ This may become, by the way, a helpful avenue to reconsider Thomas’s dialogical method in the *Summa*, especially for conditioning the unity and interdependence of virtues through a sort of “exercise” (*exercitio*). As James Keenan notes, Thomas draws this understanding of acquiring virtues through *stadium et exercitio* from the Persian polymath Ibn Sīnā, cf. Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992), 51. For suggested readings, see *ST Ia IIae* qq9–17, and esp. q65 a1 ad1. Bonnie Kent also suggests as much in “Habits and Virtues,” in Pope, *Ethics of Aquinas*, 116–30.

⁶² *MA*. XVII, 112.

their sense of place. It must be noted that, given the interreligious dynamic, climate ethics should be careful not to impose virtue conceptions upon others. For the sake of the common good, a comparative theological viewpoint should orient dialogue actions that provide adaptive lessons.⁶³

Out of a poverty of spirit, moreover, concerned agents might beware of the temptations toward perfection. It is a basic lesson of solidarity that Willis Jenkins's "prophetic pragmatism" instills. Rather, in response to climate change, reform projects may be received as "gifts." In a basic sense, practicing temperance is initiated with a deeper awareness that specific activities continue with destructive tendencies. Turning instead to "reform projects," Jenkins argues, the sort of moral inspiration and creativity needed to adapt ethically might be drawn from actual cases of cultural change. Providing moral clarity, furthermore, reform projects such as this Muslim initiative can demonstrate how to incorporate holistic thinking into temperance.⁶⁴ For Catholics particularly, a pragmatic reason motivates this turn. While Pope Francis urges Christians and others to look the crisis with a "local" perspective, we suggest that wherever we turn in climate ethics we draw from their specific context. In *Laudato si'*, he also imagines a renewed ecological commitment out of seminaries and other Catholic educational institutions, based specifically on "responsible simplicity," "grateful contemplation of God's world," and interlocking care for "the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment." As

⁶³ With focus on virtues as moral truth, I think, the foregoing synthesis relates to the basic condition of comparative learning in Catherine Cornille, *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 2008), 27–44.

⁶⁴ For a recurring notion on the role of alterity in narrative engagement and developing ecological virtue, see Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue*, 91–3, 99–107, esp. 106, and 143–4, when he formulates his most explicitly committed stance in a Ricoeurian key: "Engaging otherness in the form of other narratives will, again, force us to clarify why one account is more plausible than another; it will also open us to novel perspectives detailing alternative, perhaps more plausible, accounts of virtue and flourishing."

similar sites of religious learning, *eco-pesantren* seem to provide a practical model that may facilitate and enhance, to borrow the language of Pope Francis, “personal qualities of self-control and willingness to learn from one another” (sec. 214). In other words, turning particularly to the *eco-pesantren* as an emergent paradigm of “integral ecology,” we might discover very concrete examples—albeit imperfect—that resonate with Pope Francis’s vision. In the case of Indonesia, the needs of the poor and safeguard God’s creation are foregrounded in particularly salient ways.

3.2. *Eco-pesantren as an Emergent Paradigm of Integral Ecology*

Turning to Indonesia, we can start to examine how a particular Islamic response to climate change is embodied, while considering more practically what temperance means in response to the crisis. Based on a literature review, a case study of this movement is drafted to outline key religious developments in response to climate change.⁶⁵ Also relevant for Muslim-Christian dialogue, the case of Indonesia bears significance for the worldwide Muslim response. In fact, Din Syamsuddin served as the Muslim representative at the Vatican prior to the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si’*. As chairman of the Muhammadiyah, he is a chief proponent of developing the *eco-pesantren* model of “integral ecology.” In 2015, as one commenter remarked, efforts coalesced to “reinvigorate” the global commitment to enhance Muslim climate responsiveness in the spirit of “interfaith competition” and underscore the relevance of religion on this issue.⁶⁶ This initiative can be seen to have started as early as the first decade of the twenty-first century. For climate ethics, dialogically, this movement and the development of virtue

⁶⁵ As such, this case study attempts to address a lacuna in the literature of climate ethics with respect to Islam. In climate ethics, whither Islam? See, e.g., Mike Hulme, “Climate Change,” in Jenkins et al., *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, 246.

⁶⁶ Ali, “Reconciling Islamic Ethics,” cited at 173, 174.

ethics may contribute a substantive shift for responding in terms of virtue cultivation and reasoning about the common good.

3.2.1. *An Islamic Context: A Working Notion for “Environmentalism”*

It is important to note how this approach handles the interreligious dimension, with special concern for the normative connotations of “ecology” and “environmentalism.” When looking toward another context, climate ethics must be aware of the propensity to project and impose moral beliefs and principles onto another culture; rather, respecting how virtues operate, it is possible to consider how local communities are re-engaging their moral foundations in light of climate change. Faced with “environmentalism,” with respect to Islam, some suppose the danger is that the term could be a cipher for foreign influence and “may not originate with Muslims’ own communities.”⁶⁷ Therefore, Islamicist Richard Foltz proffers a basic distinction between “Muslim” and “Islamic environmentalism.” For a moment, consider American activist Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, who teaches sustainability. In New York City, as a public official, his commitment to ecological initiatives has extended to articulating and advocating “green mosque” guidelines. While being an activist, in *Green Deen*, he assesses particularly over-consumption and questions energy usage as ethical problems.⁶⁸ From Foltz’s perspective, the key point concerns the sources of reflection, whether a Quranic perspective or prophetic traditions inform how Islamic values are presented in an ecological key. In his view, canonical sources authorize environmentalism as Islamic, “as opposed to the activities or attitudes of Muslims, which

⁶⁷ See Ali Raza Rizvi, “Pakistan,” in *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Foltz (New York: Nova Science, 2005), 72.

⁶⁸ See Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010). One could also cite: Sarah Jawaid and the organization Green Muslims, based in Washington, D.C.; the Ta’leef Collective, working in the San Francisco Bay Area; and Fazlun Khalid’s UK-based NGO the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES).

may or may not be directly motivated by those sources.”⁶⁹ In a pluralistic setting, conceivably, this distinction would leave many with the impression that Abdul-Matin’s activism is founded on other non-Muslim sources. In a diplomatic manner, by contrast, the “Islamic Declaration” illustrates Foltz’s view of the latter, explicating an Islamic approach in response to climate change.

The comparative question entails ways that ecology, ethics, and religion are related, and differ according to cultural contexts. Although Foltz’s distinction may provide clarity, as Anna Gade warns, this distinction seems to presuppose an “essentialized conception of Islam.”⁷⁰ The basic misunderstanding, in other words, concerns the ways that Islam may be characterized as a religion that supports an inherently ecological “worldview.” It is common in both critical and apologetic comparative engagements. Instead as case studies, Gade proposes, actual initiatives offer identifiable attempts to fulfill ethical commitments and a more “workable scale,” with sensitivity to the way ecological concerns intersect with the complex matrix between religion and ethics. In the case of Islam, she explicates, the sense of what it means to be Islamic becomes more “lived and contextual” than “imaginal.” It also need not tread with abstracted, tired “post-Christian” terms such as “stewardship.”⁷¹ For climate ethics, thus, what is needed are reform projects that indicate interconnections, and practical ways to frame temperance.

⁶⁹ Richard C. Foltz, “Islam,” in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 208. See also Foltz, “Islamic Environmentalism: A Matter of Interpretation,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, ed. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge: CSWR, 2003), idem, “Is There an Islamic Environmentalism?” *Environmental Ethics* 22, no. 1 (2000): 63–72, and idem, “Introduction: Environmental Crisis in the Muslim World,” in *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Foltz (New York: Nova Science, 2005).

⁷⁰ See Anna M. Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations* (New York: Columbia University, 2019), 38, and esp. 14–5, and 18–9.

⁷¹ For the latter position (above), see Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 38, and esp. 14–5, and 18–9.

Given the constructive and practical aims of this chapter, the *eco-pesantren* provides an especially useful site for grounding holistic thinking and illustrating temperance in action. For American viewpoints, it may engender a greater sense of interdependence. In 2010, Indonesia's Ministry of Education officially inaugurated the *eco-pesantren* as a distinct form of Islamic schooling. Now, most of the country's *pesantren* (a traditional form of boarding school) is transformed according to this designation, with the expressed commitment to integrating Islamic higher education with ecological sciences.⁷²

Several key factors conspired to make this development possible. Initially, the Indonesian government targeted these institutional contexts to coordinate disaster risk management and to support more rural communities in the wake of the 2004 tsunami, which devastated the province of Aceh. Second, while hosting the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesian officials highlighted the nation's global relevance for its biodiversity and the vulnerabilities posed due to sea-level rise and deforestation because of multi-national commercial interests. Third, in 2009, after the convergence of these two events, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) launched a "Muslim Seven-Year Action Plan" to envision a "holistic ecological paradigm."⁷³ In concert with an Islamic foundation (*waqf*), named the Muslim Association on Climate Change Action (MACCA), these actors sought to authorize and further integrate a theological model of ecological education. In conjunction, MACCA aims to transpose the

⁷² See Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, *Eko-pesantren: Bagaimana merancang pesantren ramah lingkungan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014), and Syamsul Bahri, "Pesantren and the Development of Living Environment: The Study Concept of Eco-Pesantren in Pondok Pesantren An-Nur Ha Rambigundam Jember," *International Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences* 5, no. 10 (2018): 43–54.

⁷³ See also League of Arab States, "Arab Charter of Human Rights" (22 May 2004), article 38 on rights to healthy environments as the state's duty: "necessary measures commensurate with their resources to guarantee these rights."

paradigm and to bring best practices into new Islamic contexts, authorized in coordination with fifteen predominantly Muslim nations.⁷⁴ In Bogor, the 2010 assembly of the OIC identified the eco-*pasantren* as “bases of action” for this burgeoning paradigm of Islamic ecological praxis, with the possibility to promote and replicate such a practical model.⁷⁵

3.2.3. Deforestation as an Ecological and Social Issue

Ecologically, the importance of setting cannot be understated. While Indonesia is the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world, as an archipelago, it is also one of the greatest sites of “mega-biodiversity” behind only the Amazon and the Congo. As such in Indonesian islands, the provisions of rainforests include the sheer plentitude of endemic species to this habitat, which offers a vital resource for carbon conservation and possibly “carbon capture.”⁷⁶ However, since Indonesia’s colonial period, biodiversity and natural resources have attracted foreign interests. While in the past European demand for teak decimated rainforests,⁷⁷ now global market for palm oil chiefly drives deforestation.

If deforestation is considered, Indonesia currently represents one of the greatest greenhouse emitters despite its immense biodiversity.⁷⁸ According to some estimates, in Indonesia, burning forests have produced approximately as much emissions as

⁷⁴ For background, see Monika Arnez, “Shifting Notions of Nature and Environmentalism in Indonesian Islam,” in *Environmental and Climate Change in South and Southeast Asia: How Are Local Cultures Coping?*, ed. Barbara Schuler, 75–101 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); esp. 87 for “apostolic” link between schools and *wali sangra* (“nine saints”).

⁷⁵ Muslim Conference on Climate Change Action, “Muslim Action on Climate Change and Recognition and Support for Bogor as a Green City,” 9–10 April 2010, Bogor, Indonesia.

⁷⁶ For analysis of climate change and land-use change, see Josef Leitman, *Investing in a More Sustainable Indonesia: Environmental Analysis: Country Environmental Analysis, 2009* (Jakarta: World Bank Group, 2009), 53–60.

⁷⁷ For an environmental history, see Peter Boomgaard, “Oriental Nature, Its Friends and Its Enemies: Conservation of Nature in Late-colonial Indonesia, 1889–1949,” *Environment and History* 5, no. 3 (1999): 257–92.

⁷⁸ According to Yale University’s Environmental Performance Index, Indonesia ranks 133rd according to key indicators of environmental integrity such as air quality, water resources, biodiversity, habitat protection, the development of clean and sustainable energy sources, and others. See <https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-country-report/IDN> (accessed 2019 Nov. 20).

industrialized nations. Concerning climate change, deforestation represents a dramatic kind of land-use change. There are two critical links that worth noting. First, naturally, trees as active transmitters of carbon dioxide stand to reduce those emissions caused by human activities. Due to Indonesia's biodiversity, for climate change, it may constitute a "carbon sink." Dead and decaying trees, on the other hand, counteract positive effects of photosynthesis as greenhouse gases are released in their decomposition. In Indonesia, however, this effect is also intensified as deforestation tends to occur because of "slash-and-burn" techniques. Furthermore, consequences of unintended forest fires have magnified these events as the chief source of Indonesian greenhouse gas emissions.⁷⁹ In sum, this situation shows how land-use change, specifically deforestation, more broadly is intersected with climate change.

Nonetheless, since 2007, biodiversity in tandem with deforestation have increasingly become focal issues in Indonesia. As of 2016, according to Global Forest Watch, Indonesia has begun to witness a lowered rate of forest loss for consecutive years.⁸⁰ Due to conservation policies and heightened public awareness, Indonesian Muslims are resourcing Islam as a special way to teach ecological literacy. Thus, as this moral inheritance has explicated lessons for the sake of protecting the Earth, religion is becoming integral for the promotion of biodiversity and its wider benefits. Social benefits of biodiversity, furthermore, are becoming recognized more clearly as part of this response.

⁷⁹ For possible theological consideration as a form of *fasād fi al-'ard*, see Anna M. Gade, "Smoke, Fire, and Rain in Muslim Southeast Asia: Environmental Ethics in the Time of Burning," in *Piety, Politics, and Everyday Ethics in Southeast Asia: Beautiful Behavior*, ed. Robert Rozehnal (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 179–83, cf. Mawal Izzi Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2000), esp. for his recovery of the "habitation" and its ecological use in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d.1310/710)

⁸⁰ For a useful pedagogical tool, see the interactive, open-source database that is provided by the University of Maryland's Global Forest Watch, <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>

Since 2004, when Wangari Maathai was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for her organizing efforts and vision around the Green Belt Movement, peace and social justice has increasingly become recognized explicitly in relation to environmental challenges. As Maathai recalls, in her memoir *Unbowed*, that commitment resulted over the course of several decades in thirty million trees planted throughout Africa and beyond. As Anne Clifford reminds us of this symbolic importance, Maathai explains how trees act as “living symbols of peace and hope” insofar as: “A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that to aspire we need to be grounded, and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance.”⁸¹ As such, this image gives a deeper sense of place, while conveying an aspirational desire that is drawn and renewed from its roots.

Like Maathai’s Kenyan context, in Indonesia, the issue of deforestation is intertwined deeply and symbolically with the legacy of colonialism and its social injustices. In 2007, during the UN conference, the Muslim teacher Nasruddin Anshory was highlighted for his ecological commitments. As the headmaster (*kiai*) of the Ilmu Giri *pesantren*, around 2000, Anshory began to teach that as Muslims local farmers should be concerned with the state of environmental degradation. Noting numerous Quranic passages that commanded ecological protections, including especially tress, he revamped the *pesantren*’s curriculum. The vision to connect Islamic learning at *pesantren* with environmental initiatives, however, is also traceable to historic roots within the Muslim organization, Nadhlatul Ulama, in the 1960s. Even earlier, in 1915, foreshadowing that development, Pesantren Abah Anom, a precursor affiliated to the Sufi order Qadiriyyah-

⁸¹ See Anne M. Clifford, “Trees, ‘Living Symbols of Peace and Hope’: Wangari Maathai and Ecofeminist Theology,” in Schaefer, *Confronting the Climate Crisis*, 339–63, as cited on 340, cf. Maathai, *Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience* (New York: Lantern Books, 2004) and idem, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 2007).

Naqshbandiyya, combined Islamic instruction specifically with vocational training in irrigation and more effective agricultural methods.⁸² For some, furthermore, the legacy of Muhammad Syarqawi is significant in narrating the Muslim roots of this Indonesian institution. For Syarqawi, who had returned from his studies in Mecca, the social challenges of northeastern Java were perceived, due largely to Dutch logging enterprises, to be at their root ecological. In 1887, as a result, he established Pesantren Guluk-Guluk to raise awareness about ecological responsibility, initiating a prominent network of Islamic schools that still span the region.⁸³

The *pesantren*, in terms of its legacy and its support for grassroots activism, is suitably located in order address rural development, poverty alleviation, conservation, and possibly reforestation. Much forest loss is attributed to migration with formerly rural communities relocating and developing in previously forested areas around cities.⁸⁴ Whether legal or not, practices of extraction mining are another factor that produces sizable forest loss. For local farmers, who remain and depend on tropical forests for their subsistence, deforestation is a crucial issue. Generally, the greatest reason for deforestation is crop production, especially as farmers transition to crops that are more lucrative for foreign markets. A concrete example is the emergence of palm oil plantations.

⁸² See Arnez, “Shifting Notions of Nature,” 89.

⁸³ For an account of this Guluk-Guluk network and its political influence, see Abdul Gaffar Karim, “Wandering the Unholy Realm: *Pesantren* and Local Political Recruitment in Post-New Order Sumenep,” in *Culture, Identity, and Religion in Southeast Asia*, ed. Alistair D. B. Cook (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 113–24.

⁸⁴ For further background, see Martin van Bruinessen, “Traditionalist and Islamic Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia,” in *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, ed. Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen, ISIM Series on Contemporary Muslim Societies, 217–46 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Press, 2008), which provides cultural analysis according to the two major Islamic CSOs, Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama. For a case study, see Janael Effendi, “The Role of Islamic Microfinance in Poverty Alleviation and Environmental Awareness in Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia: A Comparative Study” (PhD diss., Universität Göttingen, 2013).

3.2.3. *Introducing Conservation: Islamic Contributions to Climate Ethics*

In Indonesia, under the auspices of the Ministry of Forestry, roughly ten percent of land area is currently protected. In this effort, several fatwas have issued deforestation as a prime issue of special ethical concern. Based on Islamic sources, as a result, conservation and other provisions of environmental protection are urged in response to the crisis.⁸⁵ Between canonical Islamic texts and the ecological contexts, the legal scholars summon Indonesian Muslims to reconsider their responsibilities toward God's creation. Another major adaptive response to climate change is the special designation of select forests as protected areas, known as *himā* and *harīm*. In an official capacity, the government has marked and promoted many biodiverse areas as "national parks." Introduced to Indonesia, the Islamic concepts of *himā* and *harīm* provide these political approaches to environmental protection with a particularly religious basis. As identified based on prophetic traditions, harm or even "disturbance" of special biospheres is strictly prohibited. Thus, based on the practices and authoritative teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, who created special protections of specific areas in and around Mecca and Medina, Indonesian Muslims are adopting a normative example to be instituted and followed. What does it mean to say that these zones are "inviolable"? For jurist scholar and Saudi-based planner Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn, regarding those original sites, there are possible models for relating a sense of harmony between humanity and the biosphere. Although in a starkly different ecological context, Indonesians are attempting to restore a measure of

⁸⁵ See, e.g., Ulama Council of Indonesia [MUI], "Protection of Endangered Species to Maintain the Balanced Ecosystems," Fatwa no. 4 (2014), and MUI, "Law on the Control of the Burning of Forests and Land and the Control Thereof," Fatwa no. 6 (2016). For a summary and analysis of ethical implications, see Fachruddin Mangunjaya, "Fatwas on Boosting Environmental Conservation in Indonesia," *Religions* 10, no. 10 (2019): 570.

balance through these practices. Potential applications extend to protection of water resources, biodiverse areas, and include direct cooperation with local communities.⁸⁶

3.2.4. *Reinhabiting Sense of Place: Integral Ecology and Eco-Pesantren*

In Indonesia, the political dimension of the *pesantren* and the key influence of the *kiai* (“headmaster”) may be incalculable. As institutional head of these boarding-schools, a *kiai* acts in these locales as an embodiment of the Islamic tradition. Historically, noted Indonesianist Robert Hefner regards these figures as the pivotal “cultural broker” in social transformation. Just as their role was instrumental in the acceptance of democratic structures and principles, now, the *kiai* may be viewed as “climate brokers,” tasked with renegotiating relations and raising awareness. In addition to pastoral outreach, they must work to re-model in their institutional settings an integral sense of a particularly Islamic ecological praxis.⁸⁷ As such, across Indonesia, hundreds of *eco-pesantren* represent specific sites for “reinhabiting” a sense of place.

At some *eco-pesantren*, integrally, a *harām* is affiliated and instituted as part of its foundation.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, the *kiai* and their students (*satris*) are conducting outreach to local farmers to inform their agricultural practice with this Islamic sensitivity for preservation of balance and protection. At a wider scale, according to Fachruddin Mangunjaya, cooperation is happening between national initiatives and local communities. For example,

⁸⁶ Otherman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn, “The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law,” in Foltz et al., *Bestowed Trust*, esp. 208–17.

⁸⁷ See van Bruinessen, “Traditionalist and Islamic Pesantrens,” and Robert W. Hefner, “Schools, Social Movements and Democracy in Indonesia,” in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), 96, cf. Clifford Geertz, “The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960): 228–49. For another historical perspective, see Abdurrahman Wahid, “Principles of *Pesantren* Education,” in *The Impact of Pesantren in Education and Community Development in Indonesia*, ed. Manfred Oepen and Wolfgang Karcher (Kalibata: Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung, 1988).

⁸⁸ See Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 190–3, cf. Izzi Dien, *Environmental Dimensions*.

Batang Gadis National Park is being revitalized as a protected area according with some principles of this religion-based conservation model of *himā*.⁸⁹ This religious notion is reconstituted, in view of climate change, with emphasis on sustainable use. As a result, social practices of conservation draw significantly upon the shared communal knowledge and are based on the example of the Prophet Muhammad to re-think careful, moderate, sustainable use of the local biosphere.⁹⁰ By contrast to extractive practices, this training aims to prepare students and local farmers with the ability to effectively monitor forests and biodiversity for wider public benefit.

At the very foundation of this effort, basically, religion may provide requisite motivation and concentrate powers of attention to draw fuller virtue responses. In *Laudato si'*, for instance, Pope Francis introduces the concept of “integral ecology” in order to cohere the Catholic understanding of the common good with his notion of “ecological conversion.” As such, it reflects ecological, social, and cultural dimensions insofar as the practice of everyday life is integrated into the overall challenge. Pope Francis, addressing the typical imbalance due to societal “rapidification” (sec. 18), suggests that integral ecology involves “time to recover a sense of harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence ‘must not be contrived but found, uncovered.’”⁹¹ Similarly, the Islamic

⁸⁹ For relevant scholarship from Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, see: idem, “Developing Environmental Awareness and Conservation through Islamic Teaching,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 36–49; idem and Jeanne E. McKay, “Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 16, no. 3 (2012): 286–305; Jeanne E. McKay, Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, Yoan Dinata, Stuart R. Harrop, and Fazlun Khalid, “Practice What You Preach: A Faith-based Approach to Conservation in Indonesia,” *Oryx* 48, no. 1 (2014): 23–9.

⁹⁰ See Safei El-Deen Hamed, “Seeing the Environment through Islamic Eyes: Appreciation of *Shari'ah* to Natural Resources Planning and Management,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 6, no. 2 (1993): 145–64.

⁹¹ *Ls'*, no. 225, cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 71.

scholars who drafted the “Islamic Declaration” exhort Muslims worldwide to reconsider the ecological dimension of religious practices and practices. This shift, therefore, reflects significant “institutional” change.

In Indonesia, such developments are already under way. A prime source and site for Islamic reflection is the Earth itself. One *kiai*, K. H. Thonthawi frames his odes to the Earth (*al-‘ard*) within traditional forms of Islamic devotion. In this regard, as Anna Gade has observed, an important pastoral effort is raising “eco-*dakwah*” to elicit the sort of “affective strategy” to engage attention and motivate a more ethical response to ecological challenges.⁹² Ecological concerns, more broadly, are becoming incorporated into understanding ways that ritual practice dispose Muslims toward more acute sensitivity for the biodiversity. For the sake of water preservation, ritual ablution becomes the practical means for thinking holistically about purity, social obligations, and ecological integrity.⁹³ Other ritual practices, such as pilgrimage, are also being piloted with ways to support this wider environmental movement. To this end, choosing to perform a so-called “green *haji*” enables pilgrims to consider their “carbon footprint.” Airfare to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is registered to approximate the number of metric tons of CO₂. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, it is encouraged that Muslims perform pilgrimage (*haji*) to Mecca only once. Planting trees is promoted as a practical, although insufficient way to offset carbon emissions. An Indonesian *haji* guidebook, translated also into Arabic and the

⁹² Anna Gade, “Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam,” *Worldviews: Global Religion, Culture, and Ecology* 16, no. 3 (2012): 263–85, revised and modified in Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, ch. 6.

⁹³ See, e.g., Sofyan Anwar Mufid, *Islam & ekologi manusia: Paradigma baru, komitmen dan integritas manusia dalam ekosistemnya, refleksi jawaban atas tantangan pemanasan global dimensi intelektual, emosional, dan spiritual* (“Islam and human ecology: A new paradigm, commitment and integrity of human beings in the ecosystem, reflecting answers to the challenges of global warming in intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions”) (Bandung: Nuansa, 2010).

Nigerian language Hausa, promotes greater respect for ecological protections in the context of climate change. In response, recently, Saudi authorities have put into place measures to transport pilgrims around the pilgrimage sites with transit that is powered by renewable energy and attempted to reduce plastic waste. Questions are also being raised to the global *umma* about standard practices at the *hajj*, including traditional slaughter.⁹⁴

Within *eco-pesantren*, examining personal, social, and ecological intersections of well-being has become the focal point. For example, at Yogyakarta's Bumi Langit Institute, Iskandar Waworuntu uses food specifically to teach sustainability. Of course, Islam preserves the propriety of eating practices through the *halal* tradition.⁹⁵ At his institute, however, Waworuntu fosters greater awareness of food and its place within social and ecological well-being, citing a Quranic verse: "then let mankind look at his food" (Q 80:24). In addition to the traditional category of *halal*, food may also be classified as *tayyib* ("good") if it meets specific evaluative criteria, such as the avoidance of usury, the rubric of organic standards, and a just principle of fairness toward farmers.⁹⁶ Employing basic principles preached through Islamic teaching, in addition, this *pesantren* and others facilitate the recovery and promotion of local food cultures. As such, by one observer's account, *tayyib* is becoming integral to a more holistic and communal sense of ecologically conscious lifestyle. Rather than being at odds, he contends that human flourishing and biospheric integrity should become understood as intrinsically interconnected.

⁹⁴ For an Indonesian initiative, see *Haji Ramah Lingkungan: Bagaimana Peserta Haji dan Umrah dapat Berkontribusi Melestarikan Lingkungan?* ("Sustainable *hajj* and *umrah*: How can *hajj* participants contribute to preserving the environment?") (Jakarta: Universitas Nasional Press, 2012), which is enacted in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

⁹⁵ For an American perspective that re-examines these practices, see Kecia Ali, "Muslims and Meat-eating: Vegetarianism, Gender, and Identity," *JRE* 43, no. 2 (2015): 268–88.

⁹⁶ Pajar Hatma Indra Jaya, "Da'wah Culture: The Way of Bumi Langit Lifestyle in Popularizing *tayyib* at Imogiri Bantul," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 25, no. 2 (2017): 369–95.

In this holistic manner, many *eco-pesantren* facilitate possibly fruitful approaches of ecological restoration. This movement, as Ulil Amri explains, opens within Indonesia a vital field of “eco-*jihad*,” that is, contextually understood as an operative notion of political struggle in the path of God especially in confronting ecological degradation. As Amri suggests, the emergence of this term is sensitizing Islamic commitments toward ecological care.⁹⁷ This general approach also find specific avenues for restricting deforestation at the local level. For instance, Janael Effendi observes, the communal outreach of *eco-pesantren* is keyed toward micro-financing, specifically targeting farmers who are also former graduates of the *pesantren* system. Addressing poverty alleviation, thus far, the program seems to have not contributed sufficiently to greater ecological consciousness.⁹⁸ In more personal ways, however, the stance of *eco-jihad* is gaining roots through the formation of *satris* (students and aspiring scholars).

3.2.5. *Implanting “Arboreal” Focus: Tree-Planting as Sites for Holistic Thinking*

As we return focus to the Indonesian case, deforestation requires urgent focus on holistic practices that inform and potentially awaken ecological consciousness. Much as Maathai has initiated in the Green Belt Movement, in Indonesia, the goal of a more virtuous ecological praxis has centered specifically on trees. In Java, for example, tree-planting is traditionally associated with local customs, without overtly Islamic significance. However, based at *eco-pesantren*, this activity has central in the formation of *satris*, relating in this context the praxis with Islamic texts that would warrant this manner of ecological praxis.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ulil Amri, “From Theology to a Praxis of ‘eco-*jihad*,’” in *How the World’s Religions Are Responding to Climate Change: Social Scientific Investigations*, ed. R. G. Veldman, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-Delay (London: Routledge, 2014), esp. 76–6, 88–91.

⁹⁸ See Janael Effendi, “The Role of Islamic Microfinance in Poverty Alleviation and Environmental Awareness in Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia” (PhD diss., Universität Göttingen, 2013).

⁹⁹ For analysis into “local” and global Islam, see Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 71, and 98–9.

In the Qur’ān, there are at least two dozen references to trees (*shajarah*), including most famously the tree that God prohibited Adam from approaching. Others, however, include the tree of el-Zaqqūm and Tūba. In Surah al-Dukhān, for instance, el-Zaqqūm is presented as a tree with bitter, poisonous fruits for the people of hellfire (Q 44:44, cf. Q 37:62, 56:52). In Surah Al-Waqi’ah, trees are named as a sign, particularly a reminder of God’s agency and power. “Have you considered the fire that you kindle?” In the subsequent verse, it is rhetorically proclaimed: “Is it you who brought into being the tree thereof, or is it We Who bring into being?” (Q 56:72). The Qur’ān is also the source for Islamic traditions that portray the hereafter as a garden beyond imagination, but also “gardens of delight” as earthly provisions. In Surah al-Naml, as a matter of fact, it is suggested that such gardens “whose trees it is not for you to grow” (Q 27:60) would not be possible without the rain that God provides. In this regard, the key point concerns the source of this tree originates beyond human power and means. Trees, thus, may also be regarded as a source of blessing and a sign of mercy. According to the Qur’ān, it is specifically *from* a tree (*shajarah*) that a voice cried carrying to Moses God’s message, “O Moses! Truly I am God, Lord of the worlds!” (Q 28:30, cf. Ex. 3:1–17). A tree, according to the Qur’ān, is what God uses to protect Jonah (Q 37:146).¹⁰⁰ Notably, in the well-recited “Light Verse” (*āyat al-nūr*), a tree that is “neither from the east nor the west” plays a significant role. Commentaries usually focus reflection on its product, the oil that serves as the lamp’s fuel; critically, it may overlook the tree itself. Some traditions interpret the tree as symbolic, while other universalize the tree as not either east or west but stretching upward toward the heavens.

¹⁰⁰ For a comparative view, see Thomas Hoffman, “Notes of Qur’ānic Wilderness—and Its Absence,” in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion: Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature*, ed. Laura Feldt, 157–82 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

Along these lines, an Islamic tradition arose about the heavenly tree of Tūbā (Q 13:27) that permits trees, as a possible “sign,” also to signify potential pathways toward Paradise.

For moral formation, tree planting is a virtuous activity that grounds holistic thinking and provides tangible lessons for growing in ecological consciousness. Crucially, this activity places students in the role of caretaker, accompanying a single tree in its growth through the course of their studies. In this way, between text and context, students learn to reconnect their religious praxis with ecological sensitivity. In addition to Quranic themes, in this endeavor, exhortations and prescriptions that are drawn from the prophetic traditions are also relevant. One prevalent hadith tradition, for example, reports the Prophet as saying: “When the Day of Judgment comes, and someone has a palm shoot in his hand, he should plant it.”¹⁰¹ Another tradition describes planting a tree as a “charitable” act of generosity.¹⁰² Multiple Indonesian accounts cite directives from the Prophet Muhammad as a basis for this activity. In tandem, the eschatological import is emphasized in the Indonesian context to motivate and mobilize these kinds of activities.

Learning to re-tell Islamic narratives, acknowledging the constitutive role of the Earth, may enhance basic models of ecological restoration. For Muslim perspectives, trees bear greater spiritual significance beyond ecological importance and material relevance. Whereas the tree of Zaqqum is rooted in hellish fires, by juxtaposition, the tree of Tūbā (Q 13:29) indicates blessedness and is rooted in paradise. From a Quranic perspective, by their nature, trees along with stars offer praise to God as the creator, “bowing in adoration” (Q

¹⁰¹ *Kitāb as-Sunan al-Kubrā lil-Bayhaqī*, as cited in Mawil Izzi Dien, “Islamic Environmental Ethics: Law and Society,” in *Ethics of Environment and Development*, ed. K. Ronald and Joan Gibb Engel (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 194.

¹⁰² *Sahīh Bukhārī*, trans. M. M. Khan (Chicago: Kazi, 1979), 3:513.

55:6).¹⁰³ Likewise, according to Islamic ethicist Abdulaziz Sachedina, humans are called to worship, by simply appreciating the gift of creation and expressing due gratitude.¹⁰⁴

If holistic thinking can be grounded, it must involve a “practice and a process of becoming more fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings—animal, vegetable, or mineral,”¹⁰⁵ the *eco-pesantren* are fulfilling this basic threshold. Providing both a special site of moral formation, and furnishing practices and various spiritual disciplines, it models how to foster such awareness of interdependence. Over the course of their studies, *satris* learn through their practicum of caretaking a tree. As a spiritual discipline, in a mutual way, students are gaining fuller sense of how trees are an integral aspect of a moral imagination. In a context of deforestation and climate disruption, their aspirational efforts signal how destructive activities might be curbed in the years to come. The primacy of praxis, as Anna Gade notes, engenders “a sincere engagement that is energized by the realities of this world—and the anticipation of individual and communal engagement within the state of the world to come.”¹⁰⁶ In *eco-pesantren*, this arboreal focus creates a special kind of spiritual discipline that provides lessons and promises to reshape how temperance becomes practiced.

3.3. Resourcefully Practicing Temperance in an Ecological Key

What is the advantage of thinking in virtue terms rather than in terms of sustainable principles? For virtue-rooted approaches, a possible benefit is that a characteristic such as

¹⁰³ For a comparative theological proposal of appropriation and reinterpretation, see John Kaltner, “Nature as *muslim*: Applying a Quranic Concept to the Bible,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26, no. 1 (2016): 1–16.

¹⁰⁴ Abdulaziz Sachedina, “Ethics of Environment in Islam,” in *Islam, the Environment, and Health*, ed. Mustafa Abu-Sway and Abdulaziz Sachedina, 40–65 (Qualbert: Islamic Medical Association, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ Morton, *Ecological Thought*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Gade, “Tradition and Sentiment,” 283.

temperance draws significant focus toward certain habits of being. As opposed to policies, principles, and programs, in other words, virtue thinking involves carefully examining what properly directed desire means at a local and personal level. What does temperance in the context of climate change look like on a social scale?¹⁰⁷ More than a strategy to encourage reforestation, the *eco-pesantren* movement embodies actual examples that begin to illustrate what temperance means in the face of the climate crisis. From that context alone, the collective and personal effort to address the concrete problem of deforestation shows already how Muslims are contributing to climate ethics. Refraining from destructive desires, as Ghazālī teaches, is the principal point of temperance but its practical reach is extensive, also encompassing possessions, material relations, and the use of wealth. Thus, social practices may help habituate a certain disposition more in accordance with temperance. In short, these actors model temperance in action and may lend invaluable insights regarding the world we seek to inhabit.

From a North American standpoint, these religious actors populate and set an example that can project the sort of ethical reflection that suits virtue ethics. In response to the challenges of climate change, in this manner, key question shifts from formal considerations of temperance toward how the virtue ought to fit within a vision of climate justice. In short: How should we meet these changing ecological conditions? Reflexively, in other words, virtue ethics affords a way to implicate perspectives and proactively consider how to adapt more suitably an ecological sense of connection to a particular place. Combating “perspectival selectivity,” holistic thinking can draw points of interconnection between American contexts and the case of Indonesia. As we reflect upon climate justice

¹⁰⁷ This line of questioning has benefited from a similar shift in Catholic theological ethics; see, e.g., Vogt, “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good,” specifically 399.

in this manner, it becomes possible to draw out ethical implications for the practice of everyday life.¹⁰⁸ With an interreligious focus, furthermore, a case-based method can also illustrate key lessons that can be gained from engaging virtues comparatively.

Apprehending the challenge of common good, therefore, virtue-rooted approaches are accountable for more quotidian aspects of the crisis. As a reform project, in the spirit of the common good, the *eco-pesantren* offers a relatively stable, although adaptable point of reference for examining climate justice. For climate ethics, the attention drawn to such reform projects not only is motivating, but also a source for practical reason. To this end, the actors who populate the *eco-pesantren* movement are exemplary for the integral manner by which they attempt to practice temperance. Such an example, from a virtue point-of-view, provides a necessary case by which to measure moral excellence. As a developmental model of “integral ecology,” this movement provides a more relatable way to address the complex question regarding positive self-identity and climate change.

3.3.1. Situating Comparative Reflection: A Proper Perspectival Selectivity

In addition to the reflexive dimension of virtue ethics, such cases might foster a more adequate exercise in holistic thinking. Consider Timothy Morton’s concept, the “ecological thought.” Contesting the romantic regard for “Nature” as a “reified thing in the distance,” Morton wishes to draw critical attention discretely to ecological matters, particularly toward “strange strangers.” More concretely, he suggests, the “ecological thought” gains more definitive ethical implications as “a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite center or edge,” that fosters “a radical intimacy,

¹⁰⁸ For a similar notion albeit employed for different purposes, see Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 17.

coexistence with other beings, sentient and otherwise.”¹⁰⁹ In such an enmeshed and interdependent reality, he suggests, one “imagines a multitude of entangled strange strangers,” raising tensions between identity and difference, coexistence and agency, interconnection and choice.

In a similar but distinct vein, changing conceptions of virtue require interaction between narrative, habits, and social praxis. From a more holistic basis, let us consider the role of religion for inaugurating the “ecological thought” in Ibrahim Abdul-Matin. In his compendium of Muslim ecological ethics, significantly, its starting point is a childhood memory. For the Brooklyn-born Abdul-Matin, at Bear Mountain, not far outside New York City, he first conceived an Islamic sense of interconnection. As he recalls, from that memory, his father stopped to perform the afternoon prayer (*al-zuhr*), one of the obligatory *salāt* (“prayer rituals”). Confused, the young Abdul-Matin—no more than six years old—and his brother asked where they could pray. His father, with a simple gesture to “a small area he had brushed free of twigs and leaves,” invoked a hadith: “Wherever you may be at the time of prayer, you may pray, for it (the Earth) is a mosque [*masjid*].”¹¹⁰ For him, the notion startled him. As he narrates, “we were black Muslim city kids hiking ‘in the country’ for the first time” and “prayer for us had always been something done at home or in a mosque.”¹¹¹ Invoked on that mountainside, his prophetic tradition altered his sense of what it means to be a practicing and prayerful Muslim.

¹⁰⁹ Morton, *Ecological Thought*, 3–8.

¹¹⁰ *Sahih Muslim*, trans. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, n.d.), 4: no. 1057, as cited in Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen*, 2. For a variant of this prophetic saying, see *Sahīh Bukhārī*, trans. Khan (1976), 1:331.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1–2. For a critical perspective with a very different rehearsal of this scene, see Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 127–8.

Considering climate change, Abdul-Matin appreciates anew this sense of interconnection. The impact was indelible, Abdul-Matin recollects, writing: “That moment of prayer on the mountain, thanks to the hadith my father relayed, transformed the way that I would see the world forever.”¹¹² The permissiveness of an Islamic act of extra-mural prayer shaped his ethical perspective once and forever. With this hadith also in mind, Saadia Khawar Khan Chishti teaches that it suggests creation indicates “the presence of Allah.” Such basic awareness, as he explains, can be recognized, and habituated through “duties of care, preservation, and upkeep” so “any humanly constructed place” can be one for “worship.”¹¹³ In a developmental sense, the example of Abdul-Matin further elucidates how such awareness becomes habituated, enriched, and enacted over time.

In this light, let us look toward how rehabilitating temperance in an ecological key may require collaboration, a proper sense of holistic thinking, with the willingness to forego some desires, luxuries, and even possessions. As Jamieson’s strategy of rehabilitation suggests, classic understandings of temperance no longer suffice, nor however are they irrelevant. Indeed, an inherited sense of virtue might be crucial for challenging and even contesting cultural assumptions. Reviving temperance requires revision and revitalization, and even de-growth. In addition, for those who strive for the vision of climate justice, I would suggest considering more closely the renunciatory spirit of temperance that Ghazalian advocates.

The virtue of temperance, after all, is historically dependent and culturally variable. For Thomas Aquinas, this is due to its very practical nature. Some might find temperance

¹¹² Ibid., 3.

¹¹³ Saadia Khawar Khan Chishti, “*Fitra*: An Islamic Model for Humans and the Environment,” in Foltz et al., *Bestowed Trust*, 75.

obsolete or too “puritanical” for the magnitude of climate change, while others may pause at the notion of “rehabilitating” temperance in dialogue with religious others. In the *Summa*, Thomas himself advocates precisely this sort of approach. Agreeing with Augustine, Thomas declares, “the practice of temperance varies according to different times, according to different human laws and customs.”¹¹⁴ In other words, as Thomas teaches, temperance epitomizes how learning virtues is culturally conditioned and historically mediated.

3.3.2. *Rehabilitating Temperance by Way of Holistic Thinking*

Next, methodologically, let us clarify another guiding principle. In American society, what happens if our perception of temperance is fundamentally warped according to a normative *status quo*? Consider, briefly, how a Christian virtue perspective tends to address ecological concerns in terms of temperance. Revised as “responsible enjoyment,” temperance is introduced as an ecological virtue by Kathryn Blanchard and Kevin O’Brien according to its relevant ability to balance personal needs and the real suffering of others.¹¹⁵ Thinking with temperance more *holistically*, their ethical perspective brings practical aims of eating well and practices around “food into conversation with the *limits* of healthy living, healthy neighbors, and a healthy earth.”¹¹⁶ Countering a “surplus of self-denial,” in the view of Blanchard and O’Brien, Thomas Aquinas lends a helpful avenue to discipline a “balanced approach” between competing desires, with a discernibly more mature stance

¹¹⁴ *ST* IIa IIae q170, a1, ad3.

¹¹⁵ See Kathryn Blanchard and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Temperance: Between Communal Production and Personal Consumption of Food,” in *An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 63–83.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63. Emphasis mine.

toward food choices, including human membership within creation and also structural problems inherent to global food systems.

In this practical domain, the sensuality that Thomas provides for learning temperance is vital for reformulating this moral virtue. A mature interpretation of Thomistic temperance as responsible enjoyment, by their view, becomes “a matter of not eliminating desire for all sensory pleasures but rather of ordering desire toward God’s purposes for humankind and creation.” For the present horizon, in this manner, they attempt to direct attention between radical austerity and “immediately indulging every infantile desire.”¹¹⁷ In a Christian perspective, they also seek to dissuade other Christians from a false dichotomy between the habitual excesses and norms of American society and a hermetic self-discipline that requires absolute renunciation. Considering climate change, they suggest, Christians might turn to the wisdom of the desert as represented in Evagrius Ponticus, “who connected food to the temptations of the secular world.” Accordingly, “it is easy to imagine an Evagrian call for contemporary Christians to turn away from irresponsible and uninformed eating.” In this view, seeking simple foods and locavore options may simply become service to God, as opposed to the “food-industrial complex” and self-care is regarded as a commodity.¹¹⁸ Given widespread ignorance of food sources and magnitude of harms that the food economy inflicts within the U.S., they construe the virtue thus: “Temperance means knowing where our food comes from, how it impacts the earth’s ecosystems, what creatures have suffered to bring it to us, and which of our neighbors are not getting what they need.”¹¹⁹ To practice temperance, therefore, their claim

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 70.

suggests how Christians could become able to discern personal enjoyment more adequately, while taking up real challenges of food insecurity for the hungry and other possible aims of social transformation.

In this introductory manner, like Pope Francis, practicing temperance would entail the concrete means for appreciating abundance that also restore ecological well-being. Examining temperance anew is capable of revitalizing virtue responses to food politics. Citing the work of the practical theologian Jennifer Ayres, Blanchard and O'Brien point to the example of Warren Wilson College, in North Carolina, which has integrated an agricultural practicum with the liberal arts. As part of its service-immersion program, a Christian mission-based pilgrimage to Cuentepec, Mexico, seeks to more adequately understand how the global food-system works. For Christian temperate eating, the principle lesson this cross-cultural dialogue instills is: "we never eat alone, so responsible enjoyment calls for a public engagement in a broader community."¹²⁰

Still, for the sake of climate ethics, should practicing temperance demand a sharper critical contrast with the prevailing culture of consumerism? Blanchard and O'Brien, notably, caution Christians to temper their rhetoric concerning "a topic as complex and emotionally powerful as food," with acute awareness of tensions between human hunger and environmental degradation. For those who seek to foster commitments to climate justice, however, should not reflection be based on concrete problems and challenges the climate crisis imposes elsewhere? In other words, the question concerns what should determine the priorities of temperance: Is it those who are most vulnerable to vagaries of climate change, or is it American norms and experiences that should determine how

¹²⁰ Ibid., 77–9, cited at 79. See Jennifer Ayres, *Good Food: Grounded Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013).

temperance is defined? Christian notions of temperance, altered as they are in an American milieu, may crucially lack sufficient links to justice. By contrast, the sense of holistic thinking provided through the Indonesian case of the eco-*pesantren* movement sheds a different light. Practicing temperance requires proportionate awareness, particularly about the impact of consumerist choices. If not, practicing temperance as merely “responsible enjoyment” can inscribe into virtue ethics destructive habits that fail to emphasize the extent to which limits are exceeded. Although temperance risks moralizing or normalizing cultural habits, it also directly addresses the need for changing lifestyles.

3.3.3. What Is Due? Consumerism, Deforestation, and Sobriety

Taking account of American consumerist habits with Indonesia in view, the global scope and planetary impact of consumerist habits can be placed into more adequate respect for choices, decisions, and actions that customize the practice of everyday life. In this quotidian domain, the Thomistic point that Nicholas Austin rearticulates pertains to the manifold nature of the virtue, especially concerning its potential expansion with respect to other material concerns. “Temperate drinking,” he writes, “differs from temperate eating, since drink and food present different challenges to the good of reason and therefore need to be modulated differently.”¹²¹ In kind, potentially, the same principle might be posed more broadly to temperate use of other material goods. As Thomas explicitly teaches with respect to sobriety, such a disposition principally is related to material concerns with alcoholic drink. In brief, notably, Thomas mentions once that it also would apply to any objects that attract desire to such an extent that, in effect, obsession with such objects hinders reason. For climate ethics, furthermore, we can add: just as anyone knows who has

¹²¹ Austin, “Defining Temperance Causally,” 9.

ever lived with an alcoholic, sobriety is not simply or even primarily a private matter—as Treanor and others would have us consider. Indeed, sobriety improves well-being of the individual; but it also directly benefits those who surround him, especially those most near to him. Similarly, the lack of sobriety toward material goods and ecological relations tends to have much wider repercussions. Emerging concerns around consumerist habits thus might engender a more acute sense that wanting less enriches overall well-being, and that involves holistically personal, social, and ecological dimensions.¹²²

Although Thomas acknowledges the possibility that sobriety pertains materially to a wider range of concerns, in principle, Ghazālī’s virtue account provides virtue responses with a more holistic basis. Addressing possessive habits, accordingly, Christians might learn from the way his perspective expands temperance’s material scope. Holistically, appetitive concerns today are given moral consideration beyond classic understandings of appetitive concerns toward what we might refer to as materialist possessions. Practically speaking, how can greed be overcome? For Ghazālī, committed practices of abstinence and fasting serve as the roots that refine those desires that tend to distract earnest seekers from higher pursuits. Strikingly, Ghazālī reserves a central place for prayers in “training” desire. In an aspirational way, suggests Abdul-Matin, an Islamic sense of interconnection is fostered as prayerful seekers attempt to come into fuller harmony with God’s creation: “If everything in nature is in a constant state of prayer, then prayer for a human being is the start of physical and spiritual expression of this Oneness.”¹²³ As in many *eco-pesantren*, precisely through prayer, the most intimate laments become audible; and yet, as a practical

¹²² For a helpful overview with virtue ethics in mind, see Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., “Consumerism and Christian Ethics,” *TS* 68, no. 1 (2008): 132–53.

¹²³ Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen*, 13.

avenue, prayer also guides holistic sense of interconnections, drawing prayerful seekers from current states to more desirable habits.

In the sphere of climate ethics, concrete means must be recommended for enhancing the possibility of flourishing. Due to immense strain on practical reason, in other words, climate ethics must offer specific steps to modify the practice of everyday life. Given the Indonesian case, let us take for example the place of palm oil in everyday life.¹²⁴ In recent decades, palm oil products have flooded markets in the so-called developed countries such as the United States. Here, palm oil is included in more than 50% of products sold on the shelves of grocery and retail stores. It can be found in products from cookies, cereal, lipstick, body lotion, shampoos and conditioners, butter, laundry detergents, and soap to name only a few. As an ingredient, palm oil is commonly abbreviated or hidden under names such as palm kernel oil (PKO), fractionated palm oil (FPKO), partially hydrogenated palm oil (PHPO), glycerol stearate, palmate, etc. To fund this surge in production, multi-national corporations turn to Indonesia, thereby as a result replacing biodiverse rainforests of the archipelago with the monoculture of palm-tree plantations. Slash-and-burn techniques that instate Indonesia, internationally speaking, as a leading emitter of greenhouse gases has relatedly produced collateral damage to the biodiversity of the islands. In other words, it is mistaken to regard the Indonesian case as solely a matter of domestic politics. Rather, the case speaks to a need to bridge social networks. In sum, it is dubious whether a sense of “conscious consumption” effectively registers injustices of products that are based in palm oil.

¹²⁴ I owe this practical aim to a comment by James W. Morris.

Simply, how does one exercise “responsible enjoyment” with respect to palm oil? Aware of a delicate balance between positive self-identity and human greed, trepidation is warranted. If resting on recommendations of temperate consumption, however, some virtue responses are liable to be misled. Imperatively, as important as it is not to conflate food politics with the commodification of self-care, rehabilitating temperance must not become a mode of reflection that simply tinkers around the edges by means of a mild resistance in the spirit of conscientious consumption. For Christians, practicing temperance may depend on constructing new economies of desire that stimulate and open alternative channels for climate justice. As Aquinas suggests, any practice of temperance is immoral without the pursuit of the common good. The interaction of solidarity, temperance, and sobriety that is urgently needed might become clarified if we examine the renunciatory spirit of Ghazālī’s understanding of temperance.

3.3.4. *Practicing Temperance in a Mode of Renunciation?*

Developmental models, in all varieties, might warrant suspicion, especially if the plight of the poor is not prioritized in tandem with ecological concerns. The teleological dynamic of virtue ethics, on the other hand, affords way to identify pathways forward. Take, for example, the way Ghazālī structures virtue cultivation according to Sufi concepts of “stations” (*maqāmāt*), and “stages” (*manāzil*) correspondingly, to condition the spiritual and moral growth of seekers. In resemblance to a “path” toward God, the Ghazalian approach methodically provides successive series of spiritual stations that pilgrims could anticipate. Learning temperance, at its practical core, serves as the concrete means of dispossession and enhances possibilities of attaining a truer understanding of happiness.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ See, e.g., *MA*. XII, cf. XVI.

As Ghazālī integrates spiritual “stages” into his virtue perspective, he also develops various ways of engaging the usefulness of temperance and especially correcting malformed dispositions toward wealth.

In *Mīzān al-‘amal*, consistently, Ghazālī explicates that the moral aim of refining character is betwixt vicious extremes. Equated with temperance, this moderating purpose challenges wealth’s propensity to preoccupy efforts, energies and focus from necessary tasks. In this vein, especially in the *Ihyā’*, Ghazālī elaborates clear concern for wealth and ways that excessive human desires are consequently distracted from an ultimate sense of happiness for the sake of immediate gratification. To be clear, Ghazālī does not deny bodily goods, for which he enlists proper use of wealth, covering basic needs of food, dress, and shelter. Nor does he object to effective and instrumental use of wealth, especially for social purposes through virtuous actions of liberality and generosity. Misers, by contrast, refuse to give their wealth. However, he judges, excessive preoccupation in keeping wealth and accumulating possessions deprives; it is a sign of spiritual affliction because such actions cling to wealth as opposed to detachment. In this regard, a sense of moderation is advised. However, noticeably, his critical analysis is primarily focused on the extreme of excess, not of deficiency. For those who aspire, he provides possible insights toward practicing temperance in a renunciatory key.

By contrast, in his *Summa*, Thomas Aquinas subordinates “simplicity” to a secondary role, as he explicitly acknowledges legitimate and potential expansions of temperance.¹²⁶ In contrast with Ghazālī, he does not elaborate what this actually means. In this sense, it would seem a Thomistic starting-point for rehabilitating temperance depends

¹²⁶ He specifies this virtuous attitude as “modesty” (*modestia*).

upon differentiating the virtuous disposition from its “semblance.”¹²⁷ According to Nicholas Austin, the Thomistic virtue of continence is charged with the task of wrestling “crooked desires.”¹²⁸ As Austin notes, continence disposes actions toward desires that are decidedly “something mixed,” and thus: “Just as a teacher who successfully controls a rowdy class is not yet the kind of teacher whose class is not rowdy in the first place, so continence participates in virtue in strengthening reason against the distracting power of the passions but falls short of the kind of temperance that is not subject to vehement disordered passion.”¹²⁹ Whereas continence exerts effort to resist and restrain, in a Thomistic understanding, the virtuosity of temperance only becomes apparent without any further qualification due to the unanimous manner that reason and affective engagement conform in action. In this Thomistic key, in other words, a contrasting image projects the arduous challenge of learning temperance because the crucial difference between these dispositions concerns, on the one hand, the assertion of human will and, on the other, the facility of proper movement. As Austin puts it, in a Thomistic manner: “Temperance is nothing other than well-ordered *eros*.”¹³⁰ Channeling desires and love, temperance according to Aquinas enables disavowals of harms that “inebriating” possessions impart by focusing on more fitting desires.

Practicing temperance, therefore, is capable of moderating, and thereby generating a different set of desires. A key contrast for learning temperance is available in the disposition that Ghazālī identifies as “contentment” (*qanā‘ah*), which he regards as a virtuous state in its own right, reflecting a habit that has formed desires well. To be clear,

¹²⁷ For this use of “semblance,” see the classic study Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, 17, 124–9.

¹²⁸ *ST* IIa IIae q155 a4co.

¹²⁹ Austin, “Defining Temperance Causally,” 11, cf. *ST* IIa IIae q152 a2co.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

contentment does not mean a resigned acceptance of circumstances. Rather, according to Ghazālī, stemming from temperance, contentment is first and foremost concerned with how to acquire, possess, and regard wealth. He consistently singles out love of wealth as a chief obstacle for real flourishing.¹³¹ In the *Mīzān*, he refers this disposition to the meritorious means of livelihood that is carried out in the proper way, clarifying its meaning by way of its vicious extremes, greed (*hirs*) and carelessness.¹³² In this way, preferring minimal satisfaction of needs, Ghazālī modifies the standard by which flourishing is measured. Key in this regard, according to Ghazālī, is the amount of energy and effort that is needed to meet needs. Refining character, he admonishes, should use as little energy as possible. Typically, by contrast, greedy persons require enormous effort to satisfy the desires they covet. Being careless, on the other hand, might signal an inability to give away what is beyond basic needs. In *Mīzān al-‘amal*, Ghazālī is notably silent about a deficient extreme. In other words, he seems to exhibit relatively little concern that those practicing temperance in this manner should err toward the deficient extreme.

By way of contrast, furthermore, let us highlight a possible difference in how this perspective examines the way temperance moderates. Let us briefly note how Austin effectively highlights the paradigmatic way that Thomas understands temperance. In effect, according to a Thomistic perspective, temperance tutors human affect so that a flourishing sense of temperance palpably exudes “delight”¹³³ For Thomas, the moral key of continence implicates the human will. As for Ghazālī, by contrast, acquiring contentment

¹³¹ See, e.g., *MA*, XVI, 80, XX, 31, and *Ihyā’*, I.5, II.3, III.7, IV, 4. For basic summary, see Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory*, 71-4.

¹³² In this regard, Ghazali accepts an Avicennan way of framing “contentment.” This might fit, loosely, with Thomas’s understanding of “honesty” as a certain disposition that exudes “due proportion” (q145).

¹³³ Thomas, *De veritate*, 14.5, cf. *Ibid.*, 21 n25.

fundamentally reevaluates the practical aims of temperance. As stated in the *Mīzān*, for example, temperance is seen to be operating when a “contented man” is fully satisfied, meets basic needs and is capable of giving the rest away.¹³⁴ In a radical sense, Ghazālī reorients how temperance is measured. Whereas love of wealth is due to immoderate desire, he highlights, contentment itself is contrariwise a spiritual fruit of rectified desires. The key shift happens as practicing temperance reallocates focus from material desires toward spiritual rewards.

This shift in emphasis, in turn, opens the space to reconsider how to practice temperance. For Ghazālī, the ideal is indifference toward material goods to the extent that they no longer distract from the “path” to salvation. A dangerous temptation may loom that such a virtue perspective fails to sufficiently consider the complexities of particular circumstances. According to Ghazālī, a virtuous sense of contentment characterizes those who lack attachments to their wealth, and whose comportment is fundamentally altered about the ultimate importance of worldly possessions. In general, as Mohamed Sherif notes, Ghazālī’s revision of temperance “makes the mean incline toward the defect and sometimes to be almost identified with it.”¹³⁵ In other words, as Ghazālī prefers, practicing temperance “retrains” desires toward deeper moral truths that are associated with spiritual states of “poverty” (*faqr*) and “renunciation” (*zuhd*).¹³⁶ To be clear, he does not suggest

¹³⁴ Cf. Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory*, 71.

¹³⁵ For this insight, see Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory*, 39, also 71-2, 74, cf. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 204, n43.

¹³⁶ Translation of this term varies in Ghazalian studies. Sherif and Quasem translate *zuhd* as “asceticism.” Shaker translates it as “abstinence.” This term is vague and possibly misleading. Moreover, due to the propensity to dismiss asceticism in Islam as either extreme or a Christian influence, this translation and description aims to capture more of the Quranic connotations that are consistently the key point of concern in Ghazali’s account. For the Islamic tradition, a seminal text is Ibn Hanbal’s *Kitab al-zuhd*. It is possible that both Quasem and Sherif are uncritically adopting late-Orientalist translations, as found in Louis Massignon, Reynold A. Nicholson, et al.; see Leah Kinberg, “What Is Meant by *zuhd*?” *Studia Islamica* no. 61 (1985): 27-44. For future work, this is an area I wish to examine.

that material poverty is a good in itself; rather, he explicates, wealth can provide the necessary bodily and worldly goods to survive. Practicing temperance, after all, allows the survival of the person, and facilitates most expansively the survival of the species. According to Ghazālī, practicing temperance can ultimately attain the moral excellences of renunciation as becomes evident in those who had possessions and rejected them.

For Christians, it is too facile to equate Ghazālī's perspective with the hermetic dispositions of Evagrius. Nor does he romanticize material poverty, as he employs temperance to guide the voluntary giving of wealth. But Ghazālī does account for how becoming poor reflects an inward disposition toward material wealth; moreover, it is not without enacting a sense of dispossession. In this respect, as he elaborates, temperance is not learned strictly through reason alone. This may give only a partial sense of temperance. Rather, virtues and vices are habits that are learned in observing lawful practices. For Muslims, both law and reason determine that the obligation to almsgiving is a virtuous activity. While he does not romanticize poverty, Ghazālī still marvels at the more virtuous sense of contentment that is apparent in those who have no wealth and yet still find ways to give in a generous spirit.

In this regard, the key point concerns whether a particular desire deters or serves seekers in attaining ultimate happiness. For Catholics, Ghazālī's ultimate esteem for "renunciation" may resonate with acts of temperance that are selective, limited and especially felicitous. During Lent, for instance, various ways of fasting are meant to promote acts of temperance out of charity. In turning away from base desires that deter just actions, according to Ghazālī, renunciation enables a healthy sense of dispossession. Practically, Ghazālī clarifies, renunciation concerns neither abstinence of those forbidden

things nor represents a spiritual stage of those poor without worldly possessions. Unlike spiritual “poverty,” renunciation (*zuhd*) is a disposition that can only be attained by those who have had material possessions. In a slender treatise of the *Ihyā’*, he elaborates various stages of renunciation. For Ghazālī, the key factor is discovering the inexhaustible pleasure of drawing near to God; in contrast, desires that are associated with material possessions pale in comparison. For Muslims, he suggests, it is easy to renounce and avoid those things are prohibited according to the law (*sharī‘ah*). However, this commitment is renunciation. Rather, he proposes, renunciation becomes clear when it is considered in relation to what is readily available.¹³⁷

Practicing temperance, according to Ghazālī, exercises and ultimately trains the spiritual resourcefulness to refrain from enjoyment of those things that are renounced, preferring rather to pursue more fulfilling activities. Distinctively, three characteristics set a virtuous sense of “renunciation” apart from its false similitudes. First, the virtuous renunciation leads to a habit of being that “neither exults over what is present nor bewails its absence.” Second, complementing indifference toward wealth, renunciation enables indifference toward status that hinges upon social adulation or blame. Third, yearning, a sense of intimacy rests primarily with God. “For the heart can never pass up the sweetness of love,” Ghazālī summarizes, “be it the love of the world or the love of God.”¹³⁸

Articulating the virtues of “renunciation,” Ghazālī upends the potentially subjective logic of contentment. It is not my aim to summarize his conception of this “mystical” virtue, but rather to highlight how practical concerns shape the ultimate purpose of

¹³⁷ See *Ihyā’* IV, 4; Eng. trans.: *Al-Ghazālī on Poverty and Abstinence*: Kitāb al-faqr wa’l-zuhd; *Book of the Religious Sciences*, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, trans. Anthony F. Shaker (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2019).

¹³⁸ *Al-Ghazālī on Poverty and Abstinence*, trans. Shaker, 146.

temperance in directing and controlling desires. In this part of the *Ihyā'*, Ghazālī shows how poverty and renunciation provide “salutary” (*munājāt*) means for encountering God—and ought not be seen as ends in themselves. Rather decisive, renunciatory habits embolden and suffuse actions directed toward a higher good, while forsaking previously distorted desires. Contemplative practices of *dhikr* (“remembrance”) prescribed by a master, for example, enrich moral training so the spiritual power of those recitations occupies not only the tongue, but eventually the heart.¹³⁹ For Ghazālī, in this way, renunciation is neither total negation of the self nor an end in itself, but spiritual means for aspiring agents to grow by being capable of “turning away from a particular desire.”

For climate ethics, in this way, a sense of renunciation may be easy or difficult to grasp. A Ghazalian perspective may rebuke specific kinds of developmental bias, elucidating the shadow side of striving. In an age of climate change, it seems, practicing temperance must be able to articulate reasonable grounds for reclaiming and nurturing a certain kind of renunciatory impulse. To be clear, not all would be called to renunciation. For those who experience material poverty, renunciation not only fails to strike the right key, but it is also misdirected. Rather, as Ghazālī attempts to make plain, not all are summoned to foster an aptitude for renouncing their possessions. However, he suggests more universally that practicing temperance enables vigilant discernment into what should be desirable.¹⁴⁰ In a twofold sense, Muhammad Quasem remarks, renunciation achieves “virtual abandonment of this world and concentration on the next.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ See *Ihyā'* III.2.11.

¹⁴⁰ For interesting introductions to “renunciation,” see Quasem, *Ethics of al-Ghazali*, 166–70, and Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, 140–2.

¹⁴¹ Quasem, *Ethics of al-Ghazali*, 168.

Breaking more sharply from consumerist habits, in response to climate change, practicing temperance thus requires practical insight into how to exercise this disposition for the sake of the common good. Temperance, therefore, may be assigned a fuller agenda than its secondary status as an auxiliary power to prudence and justice.¹⁴² Enriching considerable linkages between temperance and justice, a Ghazalian perspective prompts reconsideration of how temperance functions. According to Thomas, indeed, temperance restrains and channels, but it also includes parts that embrace “shame-facedness,” with “honesty” as a blessing that make temperance more easily apprehended. For Thomas, the latter virtue’s role is integral to attain temperance insofar as a “spiritual beauty” is exhibited that is fitting and ordered for a life well lived; so, governed by justice, it focuses on due proportion. However, if less through force of will than by way of ecological sensitivities, a Thomistic understanding can point to a new different way that law is placed in the hearts and written in the minds of those seek justice. Responsive to climate change, accordingly, a Christian understanding of temperance may recognize in Ghazālī’s renunciatory model seeds for rehabilitating what the virtue ought to mean.

In climate ethics, renunciation may animate the concrete means to struggle in reclaiming a proper sense of due proportion, as well as acceptance of a fuller calling. From a Catholic viewpoint, whatever is understood about Ghazālī’s Islamic conception of temperance is dimly known.¹⁴³ But still, in a radical sense, its renunciatory spirit rightfully stimulates reconsideration of temperance in its Christian roots. In Ghazālī’s presentation,

¹⁴² For a similar critique of Thomas’s “system” of the cardinal virtues and revision, see James F. Keenan, S.J., “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” *TS* 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–29. In my opinion, the perspective of Blanchard and O’Brien serves as a case in point of the limitations. The description of temperance as an ecological virtue fails to bring out the distinctiveness of temperance in relation to the others.

¹⁴³ For a systematic reflection that informs this reflexive turn, see David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1991), 42.

ultimately, virtues of renunciation are to be embraced on theological grounds and through a purified sense of yearning. By rediscovering the value of renunciation as a moral virtue, narratives may further draw out subtly and yet still fundamentally reflect the distinctive shape and spirit of Christian dispossession. After all, who can forget Luke's Jesus resisting the devil's temptations? How else, in turn, is Christian discipleship to make sense if it does not call upon renunciation to follow Jesus? As for Thomas himself, should we not also remember him as he is, that is, a mendicant, and one who specifically turned away from the relative luxury of monastic life to roam widely for the sake of getting a glimpse of the beatific vision?

Due to the climate crisis, in this manner, some habitual reaction must be challenged, not simply fine-tuned. A comparative perspective may provide avenues of mutual transformation. For climate ethics, in the end, there are plenty of reasons to suggest that worldly renunciation is not a sufficient response. Thus, whereas a Ghazalian perspective seems to encourage and advise detachment from worldly affairs, as a critical counterpoint, Thomistic virtue ethics resolutely is committed to human agency more fully *participating* in God's justice. Ghazalian appreciation for justice as a virtue remains a matter of debate.¹⁴⁴ However, acquiring virtue ought not be misunderstood as merely an individual journey concerning a personal sense of refinement; more broadly, rather it involves a communal endeavor. For Thomas, conceivably, flourishing also pertains to the whole of creation and each species, as creatures, participate toward the wider good of creation. Now, due to climate change, some Thomistic presuppositions may be irretrievably shaken. Concerning

¹⁴⁴ For different readings, see Moosa, *Poetics of Imagination*, 244–5, and Vincent J. Cornell, “Applying the Lessons: Ideals versus Realities of Happiness from Medieval Islam to the ‘Founding Fathers’,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014): 92–108. Compare Quasem, *Ethics of al-Ghazali*, 24, and Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, 75.

humanity as a moral species, as Louke van Wensveen pointed out in 2001, even “if this entire population were virtuous, other creatures would be crowded out.”¹⁴⁵ As we turn more directly toward moral agency and ecological relations, how can a Thomistic foundation still balance self-conscious appreciation and generous breadth of the common good in a way that tempers some of the world-denying impulses in Ghazālī’s virtue account. Regarding ecological agency, more shall be elaborated in chapter 4. But to conclude, let us return to sobriety as a foundational virtue.

3.3.5. *Renewing Thomas beyond Thomas? Sobriety in a Prophetic Mode*

In *Laudato si’*, we read that the path toward climate justice according to Pope Francis must be fostered through the exercise of sobriety. Developing ecological sensitivities through temperate actions, to be clear, need not succumb to worldly withdrawal or a deadened sensibility to materiality. Rather, as Austin explains, Thomas perceives temperance to have a “harmonious” quality in action since desires are ordered and attain integral fulfillment. Thomas, moreover, contributes an appreciation of humans as participatory beings within the wider context of creation.¹⁴⁶ But this ideal state of human agency is a far cry from our current situation. Thus, addressing ecological integrity to human flourishing must emphasize affective, imaginative, narrative, and communal terms. With Ghazālī, virtue ethics may provide three constitutive bases for appreciating a

¹⁴⁵ Van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues*, 29.

¹⁴⁶ See Porter, *Recovery of Virtue*, 40, cf. *ST* Ia q65 a2. On the other hand, Stephen Pope relates the compatibility of Thomistic thinking to the naturalist philosophy of Rosalind Hursthouse, cf. “Virtue in Theology,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 400, with respect to “four natural humans ends—individual survival, species continuation, freedom from pain and enjoyment of pleasure, and group functioning,” cf. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

rehabilitated virtue such as temperance, and sobriety, namely, the intellectual, affective, and active.¹⁴⁷

As an intellectual way of knowing, the moral virtue of sobriety assumes a distinctly prophetic character in the face of climate change. The virtuous disposition that Pope Francis envisions in *Laudato si'*, as a way of knowing, begins as a conscious attitude that acknowledges how human power exceeds limits on both a global and local scale. If the virtue of solidarity, in the sphere of climate ethics, attends to the human impact of the crisis, then sobriety becomes the way of knowing that sensitizes persons to suffering more widely in the biosphere. The *kiai* and *satris* of the *eco-pesantren*, for example, exemplify this understanding through the hymnic odes to creation as a gift of God the creator and the lamentations for human arrogance on the earth. The moral virtue of sobriety, in response, may attend and seek to master prevailing consumerist habits. Moral as such, sober agents seek to uproot those desires by directing, constructively, others toward restoring ecological relations. Sobriety disposes us, as a matter of course, by way of a firm critique in contexts of excess, consumption, material plunder, and human greed. As Ghazālī advises, a sense of sobriety may animate the renunciation of permissible things for the sake of worthier activities. While the Ghazālīan perspective enables self-scrutiny, vigilance, and exercises freedom to let go, the Thomistic stance seems to limit temperance for the sake of justice

3.3.6. *Rearticulating Sobriety in a Contemplative Mode*

Rehabilitating temperance by way of the ecological virtue of sobriety, as proposed in *Laudato si'*, seems to possess a distinct but relatedly contemplative disposition.

¹⁴⁷ Sherif translates Ghazālī's analytical framework as "knowledge" (*marifa*), "positive disposition," and "action," cf. *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*.

Practicing temperance, in this manner, it must not be subject to either the “cosmological temptation” or an immoderate use of holistic thinking. Rather, rooted in a clear sense of place and respecting relations with the “strange strangers” of God’s creation, holistic thinking can support climate justice by grounding it more deeply and intimately with the characteristic ecological complexity of the climate crisis. For climate ethics, in addition, virtue ethics can emphasize affective dimensions of virtue cultivation. Accordingly, beyond the specificity, the nuance and concreteness of actual cases allows the exercise of sobriety to expand its spiritual capacity and may enable fuller response.

Again, take for example the tree-planting activities at the *eco-pesantren*. This virtuous activity concretely provides the meditative means for future Muslim scholars to situate holistic thinking, while practicing temperance toward creation. Fostering such commitment further demonstrates how humans may become habituated to hear the voices and suffering of fellow creatures. Rooted within prophetic traditions and Quranic injunctions to behold how stars and trees naturally praise the creator, *satris* become particularly receptive to learning the varieties of goodness by which to praise God and with discrete focus to the concrete particularity of a single tree. Resisting temptations toward mastery and learning to refrain from reducing fellow creatures to “resources,” in turn, climate ethics may seek alternative means for relating ecologically. As such, trees are revalorized from natural resources toward exemplary resources that inspire Muslim practitioners to praise creation. To be a sober agent, similarly, ought to also involve a particular affect—not demeaned as mere “emotions,” but integral for virtue responses.

Finally, let us reconsider Thomas. Reading Thomas, one may find glimmers and key insights for articulating virtues ecologically. A cornerstone of Thomas’s elaboration of

virtue ethics is the gift of reason, a conviction that permits his profound appreciation for non-Christian thinkers. A scriptural warrant that Thomas frequently cites is Paul's exclamation that, since the creation of the world, God's "invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what He has made" (Rom 1:19). Thomas has become, as a matter of course, a target for ecocentric critics who skewer what they supposed to be his anthropocentrist proclivities.

However, one should consider his robust appreciation for the sense of interconnection that this biblical source provides. This Pauline thread, which perceives divine presence as manifest in creation, surfaces in the *Summa* when Thomas reflects explicitly on the interrelation of God, humanity, and non-human creation. According to Willis Jenkins, in this respect, Thomas "anticipates" the emergence of ecological virtues by requalifying the biblical mandate for "dominion" as found in the priestly perspective of creation (Gen. 1:26, 1:28).¹⁴⁸ For Thomas, this insight is possibly due to a back-and-forth reading between the first creation story in Genesis, and the second. While in the Garden, although humans had need for neither animals nor food, still in this state of innocence humanity "needed animals in order to have experimental knowledge [*ad experimental cognitionem*] of their natures."¹⁴⁹ For Thomas, at least, it is significant that God brought the animals to humans (Gen. 2:19–20) so as to "give names expressive of their respective natures."¹⁵⁰ Adducing wild animals and birds as fellow creatures, God offers Adam a way

¹⁴⁸ Willis Jenkins, "Mysterious Silence" esp. 452: "Thomas's connection of dominion and dignity anticipates ecological virtues as habits through which persons learn friendship with God by realizing the goods of their kinship with God." For his earlier considerations of this Thomistic basis, see Jenkins, "Biodiversity and Salvation: Thomistic Roots for Environmental Ethics," *The Journal of Religion* 83, no. 3 (2003): 401–20, and *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 128–9.

¹⁴⁹ *ST I* q96 a1 ad1.

¹⁵⁰ *ST I* q96 a1 ad3.

to know the invisible things of divine nature. In other words, God draws humans into friendship particularly through knowing more intimately these “strange strangers.”

For the sake of habituating sobriety, according to Pope Francis, a particular way of seeing creation needs to be nurtured. The Qur’ān, as we shall highlight in chapter 4, explicitly accounts for naming God’s creation as a primary lesson that God grants Adam. In Christian reflection, and including Thomas, this scene authorizes “dominion.” In the wake of climate change, that model of human agency must be questioned and reassessed. It starts, Pope Francis articulates, with restoring balance within the virtues, and especially how understanding human flourishing depends on non-human creation. In a related sense, what sorts of relations characterize how human agency ought to relate to non-human creation? For Pope Francis, creation ought neither be mastered, nor reduced to instrumental value. Directed toward non-human creatures, sobriety provides a characteristic that nurtures this relation dialogically as if between “strange strangers.”

The benefits of practicing temperance, along these lines, can be revitalized through recovering a renunciatory spirit. Inherent to the sense of sobriety that Pope Francis articulates is an active acknowledgement of possessive tendencies; but, at the same time, becoming sober inhabits a particular way of learning from God’s creation these “names” in a more contemplative manner. Although Pope Francis renders terrestrial matters into a theological question, readers of his encyclical may be forgiven for not having a clearer sense of how caring for the Earth leads to friendship with God. This sort of dialogue between the Earth and humans, as Jenkins rightly notes, is absent. Rather, Pope Francis seeks to stimulate virtue responses in the justice key of “social love.” For climate ethics, it is possible that Thomas can provide a different trajectory. As implied in Thomas’s

comments, Jenkins notes, the takeaway of Adam's lesson is "that God draws humans into friendship with God by teaching them how to give expression to the goodness and beauty of creation." This theological insight, Jenkins declares, is an "interpretive possibility in Thomas."¹⁵¹ Furthermore, it would seem to offer a promising way to cultivate more virtuous dispositions and relations with God's creation. To this end, in the next chapter, we shall turn to examine ways that compassionate love for creation is relatable with classic understandings of prudence and the virtue of justice. To rearticulate this question of friendship in a proper key, we shall respond to the relational question of ecological agency with special consideration of the Islamic figure of humanity as God's *khalīfah*.

Conclusion

At this chapter's heart, I have placed trees within an eschatological horizon. In his wonderful short poem, "Place," the contemporary American poet W. S. Merwin imagines:

On the last day of the world
I would plant a tree
what for
not the fruit
the tree that bears fruit
is not the one that was planted
I want the tree that stands
in the earth for the first time
with the sun already
going down
and the water
touching its roots
in the earth full of the dead
and the clouds passing
one by one
over its leaves¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Jenkins, "Mysterious Silence," 451.

¹⁵² W. S. Merwin, "Place," in *The Rain in the Trees: Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 64.

Oriented toward reform projects in Indonesia, from a Thomistic standpoint, this chapter is meant to stimulate a Christian virtue response in a key of sobriety. Based as such, by way of dialogue, this searching theological reflection deliberately extends the moral and contemplative character of sobriety as a disposition. For climate justice, still, a major challenge remains both whether and how religious collaboration is possible.¹⁵³ The more precise goal of this chapter is different, however. By turning specifically to an Islamic initiative in Indonesia, the practical means for envisioning a more responsible expression of moral agency is presented. For climate ethics, the Islamic *eco-pesantren* movement offers the narrative means to apprehend temperance in action. Turning to Islam, particularly Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī's understanding of temperance, the process of habituation is emphasized in social and corporate terms in a renunciatory manner. In sum, that concrete historical basis offers a crucial point of reflection into how temperance envisions the world we should desire to inhabit.

¹⁵³ For a similar point, see Stephen J. Pope, "Conscience, Catholicism, and the New Science of Morality," in *Conscience and Catholicism: Rights, Responsibilities, and Institutional Responses*, ed. David E. DeCosse and Kristin E. Heyer (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 39–52, esp. 51: "we have evolved to cooperate with people in our own groups rather than with outsiders." Regarding the aptitude of virtue ethics, Pope also makes the case that it must be a "social ethics," not strictly private, and "will be pursued in communal and practice-based contexts more than in primarily cognitive ways." Such a claim, I suggest, validates the need and urgency for developing a more comprehensive virtue ethics in the face of climate change.

Attunement to Being Acted Upon?

Rethinking Ecological Agency and Friendship in Dialogue with Islam¹

Considering climate change, what do we owe the poor, non-human species, and future generations? These three issues offer distinct but interesting concerns that comprise the challenge of climate justice. In dialogue with Islam, specifically regarding the Quranic figure of humanity as God's *khalīfah*, this chapter is prompted to develop "respect for nature" and "attunement" as necessary dispositions and beneficial habits. In response to climate change, from a comparative theological perspective, it seeks to address climate ethics as a collective action problem, especially as it concerns basic needs for "positive self-efficacy." Subsequently, the chapter attempts to outline how virtue-rooted approaches re-set the agenda of collective action problems, delineating possible interconnections between law and virtue cultivation. Next, this chapter identifies in the green sister movement a case study whereby it is possible to identify "attunement" and "respect for nature" as virtuous habits. Finally, on the bases of this comparative exercise and case study, the conclusion sketches five distinct models of ecological agency. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to understand what virtue ethics more adequately can bring to bear on reconciling human and ecological flourishing.

Foundations for Friendship: Reinhabiting Virtue Ethics, Renewing Ecological Agency

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis centers his appeal to dialogue and call for social action on "care for creation." As climate change intensifies, by identifying himself as "brother" to all of God's creatures, Pope Francis traces the basic question of what it means to be human in an unquestionably relational manner with the rest of God's creation. Addressing all humanity, in opposition to "tyranny," he foregrounds a different touchstone for ecological agency. Notably, "care" marks also a significant departure from Christian preferences for assuming relations in terms of "stewardship"—a term Pope Francis uses only twice. By virtue of "care," instead, his readers can infer how it is possible to resist

¹ By "attunement," holistically, I seek to develop a virtue term as an ecologically reconfigured form of prudence. For an introduction of this term, see Louke van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues: The Emergence of Ecological Virtue Ethics* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1997). For the twofold sense in which I use it, see below. I seek to develop an integral concern for rectifying injustices, especially for the poor.

weaker responses that seem conditioned both by extreme consumption and naïve faith in technological solutions.² In this way, “care” initiates different ways of relating how persons should engage God’s creation—or as Thomas frequently describes the “community of the universe.” Based on the primacy of care, Pope Francis directs criticism toward presumptions that humanity has taken the place of God, a tendency he contends misunderstands what it means to “have dominion” (Gen. 1:28) and deforms humanity’s proper role to “till and keep” the earth (Gen. 2:15). Although many attribute the two creation accounts of Genesis as theological sources that sanction abuses of human power, “in their own symbolic and narrative language” (*Ls’*, no. 66), Pope Francis insists lessons can be gained with “an appropriate hermeneutic” to shape moral bearings. From this basis, in his view, an ethic of “care” shapes what it means to be a moral agent in relation “with God, humanity, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself.”

In friendship also, virtue ethics provides another necessary and vital condition for the sake of promoting a fuller sense of the common good. In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis assumes the pursuit of ecological conversion ought to be approached in dialogue with others. Take for example Marianne Farina and Masarrat Khan. Reflecting on their decades-long friendship, they agree that friendship comprises an infused moral virtue because their relation realizes “God-given capacities to love God and grace to see God in others.” From their perspectives, out of friendship, they are both prompted to “embrace the ‘conversion’ to the flourishing that God seeks in us and all creation.”³ From a virtue perspective, the

² Notably, the issue of human population is absent from the encyclical. For a comment, in the context of climate ethics, see Jamieson, “Politics and Theology,” 125–6.

³ Marianne Farina and Masarrat Khan, “Friendship: Cultivating Theological Virtue,” in *Interreligious Friendship after Nostra Aetate*, eds. James L. Fredericks and Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, 59–73 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), cited at 61. For background, see Farina, “Moral Goodness and Friendship with God: The Moral Teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Hamid al-Ghazali” (PhD diss., Boston College, 2004).

crucial importance involves not just seeing how it enriches the good life, nurturing wisdom and happiness, but also how friendship is necessary as part of the constitutive basis for defending and promoting the common good. In this sense, by way of friendship, Pope Francis teaches by example the necessity and benefits of friendship. In January 2018, by a joint statement, Pope Francis and Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayyeb of Egypt issued a call for Muslims and Christians to collaborate in enacting justice, including particularly the goal of “safeguarding creation.”⁴ Although expressing a shared goal of striving for more “fraternal” relations, as explained in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis attributed the prime reason to “social friendship,” later writing: “Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a social fraternity that is open to all” (*FT*, no. 94). Thus, guided by friendship, in a virtue perspective, the key question is particularly relational: *How do eudaimonistic outlooks bear on the relation between human flourishing (understood as both personal and communal) and ecological flourishing?*

In response to climate change, effectively, this question concerning ecological agency is directed toward a particular relation. For Thomas Aquinas, as concluded in chapter 3, friendship comprises a purposeful reason why God teaches Adam the names of the other creatures. Simply, with humanity, God wills friendship and fellowship. By coming to know other creatures, as Thomas interprets in Genesis, Adam is drawn into deeper friendship with God. In Thomas Aquinas’s theological anthropology, we are provided with the invaluable language of “participation”: as human beings, we are invited to participate in God’s creation, and the creative agency that divine reasons instills. For

⁴ Pope Francis and Ahmed al-Tayyeb, “A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” (4 February 2019), available online at: <https://bit.ly/31CtK6> (accessed 14 October 2021).

climate ethics, moreover, participation draws critical attention to how human agency participates in ecological processes, especially particular kinds of human activities and social patterns. This participation may enhance or hinder what he names the “community of the universe” (*communitas universi*). In the *Summa*, Thomas reaffirms that “the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason.”⁵ In this broadened context, Thomas offers ways to cultivate an expanded sense of the common good. And yet, on the other hand, Thomas inherits and argues for a “hierarchical” nature of relations. Does he assume the centrality of humanity in this community? Although God governs ultimately, what role does humanity perform in perfecting this order? Are non-human creatures merely subordinate? In short, how ought we to regard and treat non-human creatures? Given these considerable tensions, it is imperative to understand ecological agency differently.

Nevertheless, as part of the affordance of virtue ethics, significant figures lend examples that may reconfigure how we may think and act. In response to the challenge of climate justice, classic accounts and virtue figures offer useful signposts. While the challenge of climate justice produces practical bafflement, still, fundamental questions are necessary and potentially beneficial. From a Christian perspective, as a matter of theological anthropology, political theologian Peter Scott explains, “we are confronted with the issue of the vocation of humanity and what might intelligibly be said of that vocation in the context of a warming climate.”⁶ As a result, we must actively examine working assumptions to identify right reasons for collective actions. In turning to the so-called “green sister” movement, some virtue lessons are available for addressing climate

⁵ See *ST* Ia IIae q91 a1 co, cf. *ST* I q22 aa1–2.

⁶ Peter Scott, “Humanity,” in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, eds. Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott, 108–24 (New York: Routledge, 2014), cited at 111.

ethics as a collective action problem. In the pursuit of ecological conversion, for example, Dominican sister Mary Ellen Leciejewski encapsulates the personal sense of vocation and necessary changes in ways we inhabit the practice of everyday life: “This call beckons me to grow, search, forgive, let go, accept, appreciate, question assumptions I grew up with regarding my place in the world and my connection to all creation.”⁷ In response to climate change, notably, University of Chicago historian Dipesh Chakrabarty remarks how public deliberations about climate change effectively “raise a critical moral-theological question, revisiting, in secular form, the Biblical proposition of ‘man’s dominion over earth’.”⁸ From a comparative theological perspective, thus, the important point concerns analogous ways of understanding the place, purpose, and ecological roles of humanity. In the Quranic figure of *khalīfah*, thus, theologian Maria Massi Dakake claims Islam offers its “clearest” response to questions about humanity’s “vocation on earth.”⁹

Developing a virtue-rooted approach in this chapter, we shall focus on theological sources that contribute specifically toward cultivating “attunement.” As an ecologically reconfigured prudence, by way of dialogue, attunement becomes refined in virtue terms in accordance with theological understandings of law—a key element of this proposed synthesis. Between Christians and Muslims, accordingly, I also name “respect for nature” as a necessary point of virtue learning. For climate ethics, more concretely, this purpose must be grounded in examples of those who already demonstrate the pursuit of ecological conversion. In the green sister’s movement, a particular case study is available to

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Humanities in the Anthropocene: The Crisis of an Enduring Kantian Fable,” *New Literary History* 47, no. 2-3 (2016): 377–97.

⁹ Maria Massi Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfah*: The Human Vocation in Relation to Nature and Community,” in *God’s Creativity and Human Action: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, eds. Lucinda M. Mosher and David Marshall, 101–17 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017), cited at 101.

characteristically show “attunement” and “respect for nature.” Thus, with respect to ecological agency, lessons of dialogue may identify practical implications in the examples of the green sisters who collectively demonstrate more *attuned* virtue responses, while also illustrating various ways to practice respect for nature. In accord, this chapter shall conclude with five distinct models of ecological agency—each of which strives to reconcile human and ecological flourishing. Thus, committed to correct the current state of human domination, from a Catholic viewpoint, I shall contend the Islamic virtue figure of *khalīfah* offers distinct ways of imagining attuned, respectful, particularly reconciling approaches to ecological agency. But before cultivating attunement, we must reckon with the challenging tensions of climate justice.

Knotty Issues: The Anthropocene, Collective Action Problems, Basic Needs

If the Anthropocene offers a useful way of interpreting the ecological crisis, the term ought to enhance both awareness and the ability to think through interconnected issues. The challenge of climate justice, in this vein, requires holding in tension three ethical realities, namely: climate impacts on the poor that compound radical inequality and global unfairness; a basic recognition that justice must broaden to include consideration of non-human creatures; and, finally, justice must strive to account for generational injustices. Considering climate change, what do we owe the poor, non-human creatures, and future generations? At the advent of the Anthropocene, the challenge of climate justice requires not only accounting for cumulative ways specific activities intensify human domination, but it must also attempt to furnish, motivate, and enable reasons that permit and allow possibilities for flourishing, especially incorporating concerns for the poor. Meanwhile, climate ethics needs to contend with an ethical situation that is seemingly paradoxical:

despite the planetary ascendancy of human agency, ethically, collective action problems and a basic need for “positive self-efficacy” suppose a widespread sense of the loss of moral agency.

Ethically, a “collective action problem” refers to issues for which the prospects of deliberating and acting well are characteristically impaired for a host of complex reasons. In general, a collective action problem occurs whenever people tend to be discouraged from joint actions despite individual persons being essentially unified by shared concerns and common political objectives. For climate ethics, “collective action problems” is a familiar way to characterize inaction on issues ranging from resource management and toxic bioaccumulation to energy consumption. In the case of climate change, broadly, a few proponents claim the whole issue serves as a prime example of a collective action problem. This claim presupposes more than a simple statement that underlines the fact of anthropogenic climate change as an effect of “collective” human activities. In order to appreciate the demands of justice, some climate ethicists have drawn from Garret Hardin’s concept of the “tragedy of the commons,” which provides the definitive standard for deliberating about the complex interplay between the ethical realities of global, ecological, and intergenerational injustice.¹⁰ Taken together, suffice to say, these issues can induce a loss of confidence in the ability to act and deliberate well, as each can serve as a self-sufficing reason to dampen and defeat a sense of moral agency. This basic need is what I am calling “self-efficacy.” Let us briefly examine how “tragedy of the commons” presents climate ethics as a collective action problem. It allows us to rethink ecological agency in a

¹⁰ For the most useful introduction, in climate ethics, see Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm*.

restorative manner that emphasizes the power to choose and freedom to respond more justly, while holding the key issues in tension.

The “tragedy of the commons,” as Garrett Hardin articulates in a seminal essay, consists of public, societal problems for which people want the same outcome such as, say, justice, access to clean water, peace, sustainability to name a few. Disincentives evidently prevail over motivations, however. Imagine cows on a shared pasture (“the commons”), Hardin bids his readers. This common pasture has become overgrazed because the local community has allowed too many cows onto the land. As cows feed on the pasture’s grass, the soil becomes depleted and eroded. In time, the pasture is unable to regenerate itself. In the end, none of the herders decide to prevent their cows from grazing on the land. As a result, the lot of the whole community of farmers worsens—not to mention the land itself. This hypothetical scenario, though published in 1967, serves as a useful metaphor for addressing the motivational challenges related to climate change.¹¹

In the case of the “commons,” the particularly “tragic” aspect that Hardin stresses is due to the immediacy and obvious market benefits of use: as expenditure seems low, problematic “costs” appear only in a longitudinal manner. For example, impacts upon individual farmers can seem relatively diffuse. After all, soil erosion and aridization is the result of many herders exercising their individual rights to public lands. An individual herder, on the commons, also gains much from the benefits of healthy, well-fed cows, particularly when she brings fatted cows to market to be sold. Meanwhile, that same herder neither immediately nor entirely bears costs of the depleted pasture; rather, the burden and

¹¹ For the seminal article, see Garrett Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (1968): 1243–48. In terms of framing, this article is a major source in Stephen M. Gardiner, *Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

costs would be spread out across all the farmers. In other words, the worst effects would not be experienced until further into the future. Decisive actions to exercise restraint, as Hardin suggests, might permit other herders to expand; if an individual farmer removes her herd, others might take the opportunity to expand their presences on the commons. Moreover, arguably, for both the herders and the market—that is, whoever wants to purchase beef and consume their cows—the decision to keep grazing the cows advances social welfare, as the market provides ample incentives to supply goods that other people want. A “tragic” factor signals the reality that, of course, this situation is not actually serving the common good.

For a moment, consider how this case illuminates characteristic responses to these collective types of challenges such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, or reversing energy dependence on fossil fuels like oil, coal, and natural gas. Like the hypothetical case of herding on the common pasture, in general, people seem unable to practice those stepwise actions that would initiate substantive change. To put it crudely, Dale Jamieson characterizes the general state of the problem as resembling the so-called “soccer mom” dilemma. A “soccer mom, driving her kids to school, sporting events, and music lessons does not intend to change the climate,” he says, “Yet, in a small way, that is exactly what she is doing.”¹² Likewise, as he sums up, the issue “involves [a multitude] of small contributions that moral agents have difficulty accepting or assuming responsibility.”¹³ A suggestive moment of self-examination can reveal similarly disturbing insight into rather mundane ways particular persons in specific societies contribute to anthropogenic climate

¹² Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92.

¹³ Jamieson, *Ethics and the Environment*, 92.

change. “Joyriding in my ’57 Chevy will not in itself change the climate,” Jamieson says, “nor will my refraining from driving stabilize the climate, though it might make me late for Sierra Club meetings.”¹⁴ Just as individual herders who allow their livestock to graze freely, in parallel, such contributors to climate change may notice but fail to recognize the cost and responsibility of emissions seem diffuse, distant, and indirect. However, costs not only affect the “commons,” but also disproportionately those who contribute the least.

Let us consider further what exactly the tragic case of the commons helps us understand about connections between human flourishing and ecological well-being. It offers a useful model for navigating systemic issues. The case invites us to ask, for example, how can we protect and preserve the health of rainforests that cumulatively offer a vital service as carbon sinks. But also, more generally: how is it possible to protect and preserve other ecological sites from sprawling urban development and deforestation? How do we, similarly, safeguard oceans from plastics and other toxins? All challenging questions such as these are variants of the collective action problem. While we could look to the analogous concerns with other pollutants, and major sources of emissions such as public transportation, for the sake of focus, let us stay with more terrestrial concerns of agriculture, production, and land-use change. In the “tragic” case of the commons, Hardin stresses that the tension is due to the apparent immediacy in human benefits of use. For the herders, the powerfully motivating reason is economic: simply, they are enhancing the happiness of consumers, while also benefitting themselves. Still, this case enables us to evaluate ways that immediate benefits of a present generation prevail and outweigh the

¹⁴ Dale Jamieson, “When Utilitarians Should Be Virtue Ethicists,” 167.

long-term good and longitudinal injustice toward future generations. Regarding the integrity of ecoregions and health of soil, what do future generations deserve?

Consider two other kinds of cases. In *Living in Denial*, Kari Marie Norgaard notices a reason why informed and concerned inhabitants of Bygdaby are hampered from becoming more engaged. Simply, they lack a habitual sense of “positive self-efficacy.” Take, for instance, one rare occasion when a villager named Hilde was willing to reflect openly with Norgaard about climate change. Once they began to converse, swiftly, Hilde disengaged from reflection with a casual comment that summarily dismissed being implicated. “How could Hilde tell me one minute,” writes Norgaard, “that it was possible that climate change had gone so far that it could not be turned back, yet in the next sentence optimistically add that it would be ‘exciting’ to see what would happen, as though we were discussing the outcome of a local soccer game?” A characteristically “wicked” effect of climate change is revealed with respect to the magnitude of collective action problems, specifically profound doubt in the efficacy of acting well. In common with the habitual “inconsequentialist” response of the herders, likewise, the villager Hilde is not alone in disengaging. This interaction, and others like it, eventually leads Norgaard to conclude that we must nurture “positive self-efficacy” so that we as moral agents can see ethically why and how more just actions matters in response to climate change.

Similarly, in a 2016 exchange between Laurie Zoloth and a critic in the audience, a demotivating response reflects the tangled issues that accept the inertia of collective action problems. After an inspired appeal to be hospitable to the poor in the face of climate change, Zoloth’s critic challenged her ethical claims. Unmoved, he disputed whether climate change had reached a stage that it does not matter what we do. Bluntly, he stated

that her embedded concept of agency may come across as “sadly naïve,” and even impossible due to a likelihood that a “false sense of optimism is just going to be overwhelmed by tsunami-like proportions.”¹⁵ Such remarks may signal a habitual sense of despair might already reside. Still, in sum, it supposes ethical actions are futile in the face of climate change. Might the same question have affected the Norwegian villager, Hilde? Whereas Hilde the villager wonders doubtfully if personal involvement matters, Zoloth’s critics invites us to ask and accept the possibility that—in effect—ethical actions are inconsequential. Zoloth’s critic may not think he’s arguing against any kind of response, effectively throwing our hands up in despair; however, it seems rather clear how “inconsequentialist” attitudes prevail in offering a counsel of complacency. In both cases, practical bafflement and profound disbelief reign. Roughly, just as the case in Bygdaby, the argument rests on the verdict that climate change is a foregone conclusion. In this sense, interestingly, both Hilde the villager and Zoloth’s critic are afflicted with the same issue, although for very different reasons.

How, specifically, can the “tragedy of the commons” case get us from collective action problems that tend to disable responses to where we need to be? If one closely follows ethical arguments around climate change, a complicated picture appears, but often it revolves around natural limits, human welfare, and basic human freedoms. The way to remedy ecological problems on the “commons,” argues Garrett Hardin, is to enact “mutual coercion”—in a democratic manner that is “mutually agreed upon.” By consent, in other

¹⁵ Laurie Zoloth, “An Ethics for the Coming Storm: A Theological Reflection on Climate Change,” paper presented as the 16th annual “Prophetic Voices” Lecture, hosted by the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, Fulton Hall, Boston College, 25 October 2016. For a written version, see Laurie Zoloth, “2014 AAR Presidential Address – Interrupting Your Life: An Ethics for the Coming Storm,” *JAAR* 84, no. 1 (2016): 3–24. Zoloth’s 2016 lecture is a revised version of this 2014 paper.

words, Hardin believes to avoid ecological collapse different parties must arrive at regulatory policies that effectively supervise use of the commons. Some think, in disagreement, the problems that Hardin indicates in the “commons” would be remedied best with market corrections, if the commons were to become privatized. For instance, as often argued on a cost-benefit basis, a market-price on soil fertility would incentivize a herder to be a better “steward” of the commons. In principle, following Elinor Ostrom, others advocate a shared responsibility to look upon the “commons” in terms of “common pool resource management.” If it is inappropriate to legislate temperance, then, the “commons” belong as a special object of a “social contract.” For the sake of sustainability, thus, the “commons” is a public good to be preserved. What these basic arguments indicate is not only varying ways to address collective action problems, but they also elucidate what is presupposed as motivating reasons to act. As such, subtly, each differs in whether adequately they address the interrelated challenge of what justice means for the poor, non-human species, and future generations. Furthermore, upon reflection, it is not even clear these differing approaches to justice get the case right, let alone can hold in tension the complex question of what we owe the poor, non-human creatures, and future generations. How can justice be reduced to policy agreements and regulations that may never these prioritize antecedent concerns? Are these the right ways to think about climate justice?

To address collective action problems and basic needs of positive self-efficacy, on the other hand, promoting justice as a virtue requires examining ways that enable, allow, and cultivate flourishing, but it is also attentive to injustice. From a virtue perspective, in the face of environmental degradation, the self-interests and inaction of the individual herders are not right because they are not able to sacrifice for the sake of the common good.

Instead of cost-benefit analysis, as Jamieson proposes, virtue ethics affords ways to respond more adequately to the decisive question that anthropogenic climate change imposes, that is, “whether to willfully intensify the human domination of nature, accept it, or try to reduce it.” Regardless of whether we “love or want to leave the Anthropocene,” in any case, Jamieson proposes “we need to develop ways to life that will allow humanity to flourish in this period.”¹⁶ In a virtue key, thus, the challenge of climate justice is neither bogged down in “calculating” reasons, nor ponders whether to act or not as based on speculation about consequences and potential risks. As presupposed in this virtue-based standpoint, promoting certain habits, and naming particular dispositions sets specific ends that enable, support, and sustain more just responses to the challenges. As suggested, for example, Jamieson names love, humility, responsibility, and respect, particularly respect for nature, as “Anthropocene virtues,” providing crucial means for addressing collective action problems that can seem endless and intractable. For those herders on the commons, finally, a virtue perspective also beckons the question of vocation: Who should we become? This demand, in pursuit of ecological conversion, will resonate more deeply if we re-set the agenda in terms of virtue ethics.

Toward Reconciling Ecological Agency: Virtues, Law, Ecological Conversion

Suppose Dale Jamieson is right: the proper way to think in response to climate change involves asking what virtues we should choose and develop to allow others to flourish. Motivating reasons to act matter. For a rapidly changing climate, based on these complex considerations, this chapter attempts to argue why virtue-rooted approaches

¹⁶ Dale Jamieson, “The Anthropocene: Love It or Leave It,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (London: Routledge, 2017), 13–20, cited at 16; for his formulation of the paradoxical state of moral agency, see 15.

furnish reasons that enable, sustain, and support adaptive efforts. Thus, it offers a different angle on basic needs of positive self-efficacy. If we accept the challenge of climate change, seeking to effectively reduce human domination, we can do better. In a virtue key, the special focus is geared toward change, transformation, and conversion. In this light, we can consider more broadly the “critical moral-theological question” that Chakrabarty observes with respect to climate change, examining the proper purpose and ecological roles of humanity in God’s creation.

For the sake of restoring a sense of moral agency, let me make a small and not insignificant point. In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas provides us with a lesson about the relation between purpose and intentions. For his Dominican students, as he explains why all moral matters concern virtues, he concedes there are some activities such as scratching your beard do not qualify as fully human actions. Why? This act is involuntary. Distinct from these kinds of acts, as he argues, all human actions are intended with a sense of purpose. Thus, according to the intended purpose, all human acts gain their moral character. Addressing the collective action problem, what does such a teaching possibly mean?

At the advent of the Anthropocene, concerning human agency, Dale Jamieson recognizes rightfully some factors must be acknowledged. Due to the exponential growth of human populations, excessive greed, and extreme patterns of consumption as well as technological prowess, notable factors have “affected the nature of our relationships and our conception of agency.” Since Thomas, in other words, we must contend with the extensive powers of human agency. Still, the underlying point of his argument—the moral character of our actions is understood primarily by its intended purpose—deserves serious

consideration. A virtue is developed through the way we practice and approach the actions and decisions that comprise our everyday life. If one intends to carefully nurture a tree, one is learning to be attentive. If eudaimonistic outlooks tend not to include non-human creatures within visions of flourishing, as Pope Francis urges, exercising “care” intends to develop an awareness of this relation. Quality of life is not diminished but might become enhanced. A soccer mom, seeking to provide her children with a certain quality of life, may promote different means of transporting them that are polluting. If she is intending to provide her children with the opportunities to thrive, then, she might incorporate these material concerns into her everyday choices. Concerning ecological agency Thomas might suggest that intentions have a profound impact upon relations. Considering climate change, importantly, we can intend to rectify some of “terrestrial” habits.

According to ecocritic Timothy Clark, as an “un-prethinkable,” the terrestrial nature of humanity is akin to a transcendental truth. For human beings, as he states, being terrestrial “both underlies and exceeds any view it is merely our social context that determines our understanding of ourselves.”¹⁷ In fact, as the second story narrates, Adam is molded from the “dust” of the earth itself. In Islam, like other traditions, the first human (“*adam*”) was created from dust (*turāb*, cf. Q 3:59) and clay (*tīn*, cf. Q 23:12), informed especially with God’s breath (Q 15:29). Integrally, from an Islamic perspective, this inextricable connection not only bounds human identity to the land, but also shapes human vocation. However, this facet of humanity’s vocation seems ruptured. But is it irrevocably so? Presumably, this offers one of the reasons why Pope Francis has called for a necessary

¹⁷ See Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 31–3. He seeks to evoke what Hans-Georg Gadamer means when he discusses *unvordenklich* (the “un-prethinkable”).

shift in this relation: humanity “must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world” (no. 68).

This consequential task, in the context of anthropogenic climate change, can be approached particularly by way of examining the relation between law and virtue cultivation. From an Islamic perspective, explicitly, Ghazālī emphasizes the purpose of law in direct connection to the formation of character and particular virtues. In *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, over the course of forty books, Ghazālī offers an elaborate account of the seeker’s journey toward ultimate “happiness” in union with God, extending beyond reasons that human beings can attain on their own. Beyond “philosophical” virtues of temperance, courage, practical wisdom, and ultimately justice, he explores virtuous actions that are performed expressly in relation to God, and in service to others. In the *Summa*, Thomas also develops “religious” virtues, although he supposes Christian habits of faith, hope, and love are shaped not by law, but by grace. In humanity, due to natural law, he supposes the inherent capacity to participate in the eternal law, and act according to primarily divine reason. For Ghazālī, “spiritual” virtues such as repentance, patience, renunciation, hope and fear are those internal dispositions that reflect deep conversion, but “religious” virtues result according to divine law as the effects of internal character of the soul. Fundamentally, thus, the purpose of law is understood as a gift of divine assistance to humanity to encourage the “good,” and prohibit “evil” (Q 4:104, 110). Human effort and reason alone cannot serve as the primary reasons for acting in this way. Rather, as it concerns ecological agency, certain commitments derive from listening to moral commands that bestow a lawful sense of obligation.

In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas also develops “religious” virtues, although he supposes Christian habits of faith, hope, and love are shaped not by law, but by grace. Whereas God’s grace informs these virtues, the moral virtues such as justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence depend on the human will. This strong division may obscure some correspondences between law and virtue cultivation. For Thomistic perspectives, Ghazālī provides an interlocutor who clarifies the primacy of conscience that is rooted more fundamentally and inclusively in knowing to pursue the good, and to avoid evil. Thus, a considerable tension in Thomas’s virtue ethics can be addressed thereby helping us to develop “attunement” as ecologically reconfigured prudence.

What does the hypothetical case that Garrett Hardin’s “tragedy on the commons,” and common reactions to climate change tell us about ecological agency? From a virtue perspective, the question of ecological agency seeks to determine the ethical relation *between* human and ecological flourishing. In response to climate change, therefore, the purpose of rethinking ecological agency must look toward prudence. Attunement, specifically as an ecological reconfigured sense of prudence, acquires practical purpose in restoring a sense of agency and rectifying terrestrial relations. But before turning to those tasks, let us take up the prior questions that inform the relational sense of ecological agency: How does ecological agency involve ways of knowing non-human creatures? In turn, do these encounters contribute to a flourishing human life? Which, specifically, sorts of relations characterize this sense of flourishing? Basically, what are these virtuous dispositions that build and can nourish such relationships? According to Pope Francis, from a biblical viewpoint, laws and divine commandments always “dwell on relationships,” including with other creatures, and thus humanity is “called to respect creation and its

inherent laws” (no. 68–69). Developing attunement entails learning to be respectful toward nature, and particularly intending to aim actions in a more respectful manner. By fostering this sense of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and covenantal care, attunement can fruitfully draw on interconnections between law and virtue cultivation.

4.1 *A Modest Virtue-Rooted Proposal: An Interfaith Approach*

Guided by the critical moral-theological question, a virtue response begins with innate capacities to exercise care. One way to rethink ecological agency is immersive experience. Another way that Pope Francis suggests the pursuit of ecological conversion is by way of dialogue. In Islam, when he cites the poetry of ‘Alī al-Khawwās, he identifies a similar way of understanding the “hidden” mysteries of other creatures, the laws of nature, and relations of this world. In a sacramental sense, acknowledging Islamic ways of knowing this profound interconnectedness, he intuitively finds a place for dialogue.

While not all accept the necessity and potential benefits of dialogue as crucial means for addressing collective action problems, some believe theological matters only impair capabilities to confront ecological challenges. For example, Catholic theologians Neil Ormerod and Christina Vanin believe Christians ought to avoid the “religious dimension” in order for the “notion of ecological conversion greater potential for use in an interfaith context.”¹⁸ However, in addition to Pope Francis, other Christians have found themselves both challenged and enriched by their moral engagement with Islam. In this respect, a few significant studies can be noted: David Johnston, John Kaltner, and Thomas

¹⁸ Neil Ormerod and Cristina Vanin, “Ecological Conversion: What Does It Mean?,” *TS* 77, no. 2 (2016): 328–52, esp. 336: “beyond an explicitly Christian conversion,” they prefer to make ecological conversion more generic. In this regard, they attempt to further develop the systematic claims of Bernard Lonergan.

Michel.¹⁹ For the sake of the common good, they understand that greater dialogical engagement is fruitful for understanding the question of ecological agency, and broadly motivating virtue responses. For many, furthermore, is it not unthinkable to understand their philosophical foundations, moral sensibilities, and ethical values apart from religious reasons?²⁰ Simply, how do we disentangle theological affirmations from certain dispositions? Whereas those like Ormerod and Vanin seem to fear that religious differences would not facilitate dialogues concerned with “ecological conversion,” for the sake of the common good, friendship can serve as the mutual basis that recognizes the need for deepening relations, respects inner diversity, and admires the character and distinct gifts of others. Fostering this commitment, furthermore, the question of ecological agency can also prompt us to acknowledge the need to incorporate ecological well-being into our visions of flourishing and to rectify terrestrial habits.

4.1.1. *Humanity’s Role on Earth at a Crossroads*

Fundamentally, as Chakrabarty notes, wider debates and deliberations about climate change reveals the “critical moral-theological question” that concerns the place, ecological role, and purpose of humanity. In her insightful essay, “To Be *Khalīfah*,” Maria Massi Dakake claims a distinctly Muslim manner of approaching that proposition about

¹⁹ See David Johnston, *Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation* (London: Equinox, 2010); John Kaltner, “Nature as *Muslim*: Applying a Qur’anic Concept to the Bible,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1–16; Thomas Michel, “Christian Reflections on a Qur’anic Approach to Ecology,” in *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar, 167–73 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010); it is reprinted from idem, “The Teaching of the Qur’an about Nature,” *Bulletin of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* 79 (1992): 90–6.

²⁰ For the moral difference between “inter-cultural” and “inter-religious” dialogue, see Daniel A. Madigan, “Christian-Muslim Dialogue,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille, 244–60 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013), esp. 258. From a comparative theological perspective, the Ormerod-Vanin approach also runs the risk of “lowest common denominator” as the dialogical focus; see, e.g., Sumner B. Twiss, “The Philosophy of Religious Pluralism: A Critical Appraisal of John Hick His Critics,” *The Journal of Religion* 70, no. 4 (1990): 553–68.

“dominion” in terms of humanity’s “vocation on earth.”²¹ In the “Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change,” if you recall, the term *khalīfah* is offered in juxtaposition with Anthropocene realities, starkly contrasting the planetary state of how things are and how they ought to be. For Dakake, whereas Muslim responses usually suggest providence explains why Adam eventually “falls” only to attain a spiritual destiny, the real lesson that the *khalīfah* figure reveals is a basic uncertainty whether humanity will accept the ordained vocation. In ways reminiscent of the biblical proposition about “dominion,” particularly in Surah al-Baqarah, the Quranic perspective provides a prevailing sense that humanity is inextricably bound in relation to the world around us:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, ‘I am placing a *khalīfah* upon the earth,’ they said, ‘Wilt thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee Holy?’ He said, ‘Truly I know that you know not.’ And He taught Adam the names, all of them. Then He laid them before the angels and said, ‘Tell me the names of these, if you are truthful.’ They said, ‘Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge what Thou hast taught us. Truly Thou art the Knower, the Wise.’ He said, ‘Adam, tell them their names.’ And when he had told them their names He said, ‘Did I not say to you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you disclose and what you used to conceal?’ And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate unto Adam,’ they prostrated, save Iblīs. He refused and waxed arrogant, and was among the disbelievers. (Q 2:30–34)²²

Commonly, the term *khalīfah* is translated as “steward,” as the case in the IDGCC, and in variation of a ministerial role such as “viceroy,” “deputy,” “viceregent.”

²¹ Maria Massi Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfa*: The Human Vocation in Relation to Nature and Community,” in *God’s Creativity and Human Action: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, eds. Lucinda M. Mosher and David Marshall, 101–17 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017), cited at 101.

²² All Quranic citations in this chapter are taken from the *Study Qur’an*. I have decided to edit out the English translation of *khalīfah*. Commonly, as the IDGCC translates, *khalīfah* is interpreted as “steward.” In addition, one often finds some variation of this ministerial role such as “vicegerent,” “viceroy,” “deputy,” and “viceregent.” From my perspective, as I hope becomes clear, these translations misinterpret key aspects of the Quranic sense and use of the term.

However, this official role might mislead another connotation of *khalīfah* regarding “following” and “succession.” In this passage, Adam learns “the names, all of them.” In response, as Dakake notes, the assembly of angels witness that “human beings possess a latent knowledge of *all things*,” including possibly divine qualities. However, interrupting standard interpretations, she asks: Is it not significant that the Quranic account explicitly addresses this knowledge in terms of “names,” thereby suggesting, “as yet, somewhat superficial or that it is not yet very deep or fully understood by its recipient?” Moreover, in this vein, Dakake highlights how the focal attention to names, naming, and reciting names emphasizes to Adam’s limited understanding of humanity’s vocation: “he knows that he has been ‘named’ *khalīfah*, God’s representative on earth.”²³ Relationally, with special obligation to the land (*al-‘ard*), humanity is meant to carry out and fulfill Adam’s intended purpose. As such, focally, this narrative stresses primal relationships, a sense of humanity’s obligation to others, and even a poignant reminder of humanity’s “clay feet”—to borrow Dakake’s terrestrial emphasis.

For this reason, Dipesh Chakrabarty remarks climate change exerts “serious strain” particularly on the “Kantian fable” of moral agency, especially its governing “assumption—made since at least the Enlightenment—that our animal life could take care of itself while we struggled, consciously, in search of a collective moral life.”²⁴ An artificial

²³ Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfah*,” 104. Wadad Qadi, “The Term ‘*Khalīfa*’ in Early Exegetical Literature,” *Die Welt des Islams* 28, no. 1/4 (1988): 392–411. For a general overview in religious studies, see Anna Gade, “A Quranic Environment: Relating Creatures and Resources,” in *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations* (New York: Columbia University, 2019), 78–117, esp. 83–88. For an early reflection, see Ibrahim Özdemir, “Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, eds. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, 2003). For a critical account of its relation to political theology, see Han Hsien Liew, “The Caliphate of Adam: Theological Politics of the Qur’anic Term *Halīfah*,” *Arabica* 63, no. 1-2 (2016): 1–29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

distinction that demarcated the discipline of history between “natural history” and “human history” seems to replicate Kant’s distinction between laws of nature and laws of freedom. The problematic assumption is not only based on philosophical grounds. By Kant’s reading of the biblical proposition of dominion, in Genesis, the second creation story depicts a foundational truth that the human story originates with the distinctly human capacity to reason. For Kant, in other words, Adam “discovered in himself an ability to choose his own way of life without being tied to any single one like the other animals” (Gen 3:7).²⁵ At the crossroads of the Anthropocene, however, what is the role of humanity on Earth? What should it become? How ought humans relate to non-humans? Or, as Chakrabarty asks, “what should humans do, now that our animal/natural life overwhelms the natural lives of nonhumans?”

Arguably, Kant did understand human beings as not exempt from the laws of nature, but he also believed human capacities for reason lend a certain sense of independence. Kantian duties and respect toward other animals, at least, are obscured.²⁶ For humanity, in principle, he claims moral actions are chosen according to a law that humans give themselves.²⁷ A problem, still, remains. In general, as developed from the thought of Immanuel Kant, a tendency prevails in demarcating sharply between the moral life of humans and the “biological.” At this moment, Chakrabarty emphasizes it seems the

²⁵ Kant, “Conjectures,” 224, cf. Gen. 3:7.

²⁶ For a Kantian apology, see Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society* 72, no. 1 (1998): 189–210. As a general point, see Michael Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 117.

²⁷ See Kant, *The Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

dimensions are intersected, writing: “the moral and biological lives of the species *Homo sapiens* cannot any longer be disentangled from each other.”²⁸

Concerning humanity’s vocation and ecological role, Muslim responses differ in how this relation is understood. Some Islamic theologians such as William Chittick, not unlike Kant, argued that Adam being named *khalīfah* provides mythic representation to the idea of human potentiality, which inheres each person, with a perfectible capacity for “omniscience.”²⁹ This capacity, it is argued, exceeds the rest of creation. Others such as Azizan Baharuddin stress differences between God and humanity, not similarities. This Quranic revelation, she notes ordained limits on human “powers” and “obligations,” proclaiming, “humanity is not to transgress boundaries,” especially “the boundaries of what is good (*halāl*) and harmful (*harām*), what is just (*‘adl*) and unjust (*zulm*).”³⁰ The vocational purpose of humanity, instead, is to serve the good and to enact justice. In a sense, like Baharuddin, Dakake agrees, orienting the concept of “stewardship” in a spirit of servanthood (*‘ibada*). However, in a sense, she also agrees, stressing the dual nature that this passage encapsulates: on one hand, the nobility and honor it represents and, on the other, the significant “distance and separation from God.”

From her Islamic perspective, Dakake believes that terrestrial relations are what determine the sense of humanity’s vocation, citing the divine statement, “I am placing a

²⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Humanities in the Anthropocene: The Crisis of an Enduring Kantian Fable,” *New Literary History* 47, no. 2-3 (2016): 377–97, cited at 388, 378.

²⁹ William C. Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007). See also William C. Chittick, “The Anthropocosmic Vision in Islamic Thought.” In *God, Life, and the Cosmos: Islamic and Christian Perspectives*, eds. Ted Peters, Muzaffar Iqbal, and S. Nomanul Haq, 125–52 (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), esp. 126–27.

³⁰ Azizan Baharuddin, “Guardians of the Environment,” in *Humanity: Texts and Contexts*, eds. Michael Ipgrave and David Marshall, 41–59 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), cited at 46, 45. For a general overview, see also Lufti Radwan, “The Environment from a Muslim Perspective,” in *Abraham’s Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conversation*, eds. Norman Solomon, Richard Harries, and Tim Winter, 272–83 (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

khalīfah upon the earth (*al-‘ard*)” (Q 2:30). Named as such, definitively, the purpose of humanity is *khalīfat Allāh fi’l-‘ard*. For all humanity, she asserts collective responsibility must be rendered both in terms of human beings as a species and what it means to be human in a more personal manner. Thus, integral in the moral-critical question, she suggests, are terrestrial habits. To this end, according to her approach, the determining issue does not concern the ontological status of humans relative to other creatures or angels, rather the passage raises *whether* and *how* humanity will become capable of managing itself. Considering the crisis, she appropriately highlights the moral uncertainty, invoking angelic voices: “They said, ‘Wilt thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee Holy?’”

4.1.2. Why “Care”? Pope Francis’s Call and Metaphors of Agency

Virtue-rooted approaches offer a way to evaluate and appraise “metaphors” of agency.³¹ In *Laudato si’*, apparently dissatisfied with the typically managerial focus of “stewardship,” Pope Francis teaches simply how “care” ought to instill the primary sense of ecological agency. Whereas collective action problems lead reflection to calculate best outcomes according to natural limits, social welfare, and basic freedoms, by contrast, Pope Francis underscores how “care” needs to subsist other consideration, with greater sensitivity toward particularities. In and through the human body, as he teaches, each person is capable of learning to care, connecting with earthly and terrestrial suffering. Reiterating an incarnational insight, he claims: “God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.” In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he offers

³¹ See Willis Jenkins, “Assessing Metaphors of Agency: Intervention, Perfection, Care, as Models of Environmental Practice,” *Environmental Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2005): 135–54. Cp. n88.

this insight, prefacing: “Thank to our bodies (*Mediante la nostra realtà corporea*).”³² The body, Pope Francis discovered, registers an incarnational sense of suffering. It is in our bodies, and through our bodies, that we may come to connect with the needs and suffering of creation. Likewise, he invites us to learn how to connect with terrestrial suffering in remembrance of our own suffering so that we can foster ways of caring in response to the ecological crisis.

In *Mīzān al-‘amal*, Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī opens a different perspective from which to fathom a basis for care, and the source of these affective bonds. Indicating the import for why the world is filled with “signs,” he proclaims:

It is God’s gracious mercy upon His servants that He gathered in the human being, regardless of the littleness of size, such wonders which almost parallel the wonders of the whole world, as the human is a compact simulacrum of the likeness of the world.³³

Ghazālī’s Muslim perspective reflects the key theme that God’s creation is filled with “signs” (*āyāt*), including within each human person. These “signs,” like Quranic verses, reveal hidden truths about God. From a Quranic perspective, according to Aref Ali Nayed, these signs are revelatory: “Allah’s compassion is manifest dynamically, actively, and continuously in transformative processes that keep indicating [this divine mercy] all the time.” But, as Nayed remarks, people generally and Muslims “have adopted the modern way of looking at things as mere things.”³⁴ For Ghazālī, however, this way of looking at the relation between world and self is founded on consciousness of its divine source.

³² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), sec. 215, available online at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*, sec. 89 fn67.

³³ Ghazālī, *MA*, 5.50–4. Translation offered in consultation with the French translation in Hikmet Hachem, trans., *Critère de l’action* (Paris: Vrin, 1945). The chapter and line numbers are in reference to this critical edition (as also used in chapter 3).

³⁴ Nayed, “Āyatology and Rahmatology,” 163.

Humanity, as suggests Ghazālī, is provided with an innate capacity to give witness to beauty in the world accordingly and this is integrally reflected in the innermost aspects of the self. Just as there are wondrous gifts in the world, likewise, God’s generosity is reflected also in the potential fullness of the human person.

In accordance with the *khalīfah* figure, the proper human response to this gift, according to Dakake, is gratitude: “human beings are meant to reflect upon all these natural gifts with gratitude and awe and to understand them as signs of God’s power and beneficence.”³⁵ If we stop intensifying and accepting human domination, as she suggests, we are learning to practice care, and building respect for nature. Still, these conditions do not yet fulfill the human vocation with respect to terrestrial relations.

4.1.3. *Expressions of Moral Agency: Khalīfah and the “Double Register”*

In response to climate change, the magnitude of humanity’s power tends to defeat and undermine personal expressions of moral agency. As a result, Dale Jamieson points rightfully to the paradoxical state of human agency that characteristically predetermines the way we deliberate about climate change. One particularly “wicked” effect, in other words, is “the category of the species.” For climate ethics, Willis Jenkins attempts to capture this challenge in tensions that dictate this “double register” of moral agency. The challenge of climate change, as he observes, tend to be disrupted between multiple registers. “Does it make sense to talk about virtue for a species?” Jenkins asks. “And, if it does, how should virtue at the species level inflect the behavior of individuals or their vision of a good life?” In other words, conversely, it is important to guide reflection from the “species” level of the ecological register into more personal ways of choosing, acting,

³⁵ Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfah*,” 108.

and judging. “Can a theory,” wonders Jenkins, “offer an account of virtuous feedback between flourishing for the species and flourishing for an individual?”³⁶ Unlike other forms of ethical reasoning, he claims the benefit of virtue ethics is its reliance upon “virtue figures” that help navigate these challenges.

From an Islamic perspective, in this vein, Maria Massi Dakake’s account fulfills one promising way virtue ethics can be brought to bear on climate change. For her, considering the *khalīfah* figure, the current state of planetary affairs looks like a tyrannical dictatorship. Given the angelic concerns, she recognizes “corrupting tendencies” manifest in the ecological crisis. First, “like any viceroy,” human beings violate the “trust” that their lord has endowed them when they “forget” that this power is a delegated authority, and not absolute. Instead, as she continues, human societies seem intent on choosing to treat their power as privilege to act like a “tyrant” (*zalūm*). Secondly, inconsiderate of moral obligations, humanity has become more interested in the wealth and riches of the land than in actually “governing” it, she says.³⁷ Importantly, her characterization of the current planetary regime incorporates the category of the species into the question of ecological agency. As a virtue figure, on the contrary, *khalīfah* sets a normative standard against which to critically measure and evaluate ecological agency. From an Islamic viewpoint, however, she claims that the ethical challenge is framed neither based on freedom primarily, nor as a dereliction of duty; rather, the challenge entails recognition of a failure to serve, and indifference to the “corruption” inflicted by human activities.

³⁶ For the outlines of this concept, see Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 87–91, and idem, “Feasts of the Anthropocene,” 77–80. Based on experience, along with Chakrabarty, he bases his criticism on the epistemic impossibility of knowing what it means to be and acts like a species.

³⁷ Ibid., 101. The first stance typifies the critical perspective of Seyyed Hossein Nasr; see, e.g., “Islam and the Environmental Crisis,” in *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue; An Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder, 86–108 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), esp. 93.

Second, a point of learning pertains to the specific way Dakake develops the idea of ecological agency, while navigating considerable tensions between “registers” of human agency. It concerns how ecological agency becomes personal. For Dakake, the task is understood as a matter of balance. In accord with the *khalīfah* figure, thus, Dakake attempts to orient the relational focus of ecological agency not only with a standard of responsibility and accountability, but also stressing the universal nature of this terrestrial duty: “a responsibility borne by every human being alone, for which he or she is personally accountable, and by human beings as a whole in relation to the rest of creation.” In this figure of *khalīfah*, as she interprets, the purpose of humanity can be possibly renewed if we learn to exercise responsibility, with the freedom to act in gratitude, while being accountable for all “humanity’s flaws and shortcomings, their ‘clay feet’ as it were.”³⁸

Regarding ecological agency, in dialogue, climate ethics can begin to unearth and critically examine governing assumptions. For Dakake, although similar, Muslim understandings differ in two respects from the “Christian notion of ‘steward’.” First, she recognizes the fundamental goodness of creation, stating the Quranic perspective affirms “the earth and the rest of creation as full of blessings and designed to serve the myriad needs” of humanity, and not in any sense “cursed” (cf. Gen. 3:17–19). She disagrees and challenges the notion that creation might be degraded, stating, “there is no such cursing of the earth or of other creatures on account of Adam’s disobedience.” Second, equally decisive, she wants to disabuse seemingly more benevolent intentions about humanity’s role. For Christians particularly, as well as Muslims, she admonishes: “It is not ultimately

³⁸ Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfah*,” cited at 101, 104.

the job of human beings, to govern or regulate this natural world.”³⁹ This way of thinking is illustrated in the epistles of St. Paul, especially in his Letter to the Romans, wherein it is suggested humanity needs to “deliver” creation from its agony (Rom. 8:20).⁴⁰

4.1.4. “Skeletal” Ideas for Moral Agency: Supporting Adaptive Responses

For climate ethics, Dakake’s develops the idea of ecological agency by focusing upon the privileged role of moral communities. Notably, the philosophical literature in climate ethics often underestimates or ignores this formative aspect. For her, in a simple manner, the *khalīfah* figure informs who humanity should be, and at what human actions should aim with respect to terrestrial relations. For her, effectively, the role of religious communities play in shaping moral formation:

not only to live righteously and avoid corruption as individuals but also to form human religious communities within which righteous action can be engaged in collectively and hence encouraged, and through the strength of which the forces of corruption can be kept at bay.

For the sake of practical guidance, in terms of balance between the ecological (humanity as a species) and individual register (a person’s capability), climate ethics requires some intervention. For Dakake, particularly key is the fact that the Quranic perspective defines the *khalīfah* figure not only by a certain relation to God and primary obligations to the land (*al-‘ard*), but also communally in two ways. As for “succession,” in addition to being “successors” of God, humanity is also understood collectively as *khalā’if al-‘ard*

³⁹ Ibid., 107–8. Aware of Comparative Theology, Maria Massi Dakake proposes the scripture-based approach as a “dynamic model” for interreligious learning: “A Good Word Is as Good as a Tree: A Muslim Response to the Interfaith Challenges of Vatican II,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 188–200.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., 1 Cor. 15:40.

(“successors of one another on the earth,” Q 6:165).⁴¹ As such, she alludes to an important role for law in promoting the greater common good for future generations.

From a Christian perspective, the effective use of law concerns how conscience is shaped in pursuing the good and avoiding evil. For Catholics, moral theologian James Keenan explains law is foundational before we even begin to examine virtues and public goods. Consider how the Decalogue “governs” Christian life, he says, providing “really the *skeleton* to our moral agency, framing the fundamental guidelines for moral living, shaping our consciences as we learn to love God and love neighbors as ourselves.”⁴² Just as the people of Israel learned to respond to God, in an ecclesiological sense, Christians also are responding as they are learning to form and follow their conscience. Far from separate, in this sense, a deep correspondence exists between law and virtue cultivation.

To appreciate the moral force of Dakake’s claims, we must recognize the limitations of “contracts.” First, as highlighted, the *khalifah* figure evokes a sense of covenantal care that ought to prevail over ecological agency. In this typical vein, as David Hollenbach and Christopher Vogt have pointed out, communal paradigms of “contract” often predetermine public understanding, subsequently presenting difficulty in how we should assume and accept *collective* responsibility.⁴³ Considering humanity in resemblance to a corrupt “viceroy,” Dakake suggests that humanity is acting a petty tyrant who forgets that this delegated authority is not absolute, and whose observance of duties has grown

⁴¹ For her translation of this Quranic term, see *ibid.*, 110. This is Dakake’s translation, as she departs from the standard translations that she prefers to use in the *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (New York: HarperOne, 2015), see esp. 403.

⁴² James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 122. Emphasis is mine.

⁴³ See David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Adela Cortina, *Covenant and Contract: Politics, Ethics, and Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), cf. Christopher Vogt, “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics,” *TS* 68 (2007): 396–97.

absurdly lax. On different terms, as opposed to a “social contract,” the terms of covenant provide two different grounds for virtue responses. First, based on a “covenant,” a broken promise affects trust between human beings and God. Second, in a corresponding but distinct sense, the injustice fails the test of reciprocity. Whether taken theologically or not, a “covenant” conveys the inheritable sense of communal goods that are passed from one generation to the next. However, human domination of ecological relations impacts whether others, including future generations, will be able to enjoy these benefits. In sum, “covenantal” models provide different grounds to bind agreements—one based in personal goods that are gained ingrained within a communal fabric, including land itself.

As for Thomas Aquinas, one source of tension about ecological agency concerns a possible correspondence between law and virtue cultivation. From a Thomistic standpoint, law is a complex concept. First and foremost, eternal law governs the movement of all creatures. Some precepts and divine command are explicit. For example, as Thomas reflects: “Service is due to the master in return for the benefits which his subjects receive from him: and to this belongs the third commandment of the sanctification of the Sabbath in memory of the creation of all things.”⁴⁴ For Thomas, in accord with natural law, humanity can participate in divine reason. Thus, in a sense, justice calls for an allowance not to work so that “your ox and your donkey may have rest” (Ex. 23:12). Except unlike human beings, according to Thomas, animals according to Thomas cannot participate fully in eternal law, “except by way of similitude.”⁴⁵ For the sake of the common good, conforming human to divine reason, Thomas may suppose that humanity’s purpose also involves governing God’s creation.

⁴⁴ *ST Ia IIae* q100 a5, cf. Ex. 20:8–11.

⁴⁵ *ST Ia IIae* q91 a2 ad3.

In Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, we find an alternative model for connecting law with virtue cultivation. In *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, Ghazālī substantiates reasons why religious law is necessary for eudaemonistic outlooks. Understanding divine law as a gift, he regards its purpose primarily as a source of blessing that helps those on the journey in seeking to attain love of God. While there are plenty of Quranic verses that prohibit specific actions, Ghazālī emphasizes those external practices of “worship” that divine law commands. In Book 4 of the *Ihyā’*, Ghazālī offers insights into how prayer and ritual practices open practitioners to personal goods that wisdom (*hikmah*) alone might not provide, even ordering human beings to be grateful and generous.⁴⁶ On other topics, such as the right “manner” (‘*adab*’) of eating, which is examined in Quarter 2, Book 1, Ghazālī teaches contentment, and moderation.⁴⁷ Thus, in this vein, Ghazālī advances an understanding of law’s ethical purpose that effectively transforms virtue responses. Thus, purity of heart, generosity, modesty, patience, piety, devotion, understanding offer prime reasons for acting that exceed those virtuous ways of thinking and acting rooted in practical wisdom, temperance, and bravery. In short, these virtuous dispositions owe their attainment to commands of divine law, as found in the Qur’ān and prophetic examples.

4.1.5 Adapting Virtue Responses: Ecological “Sin” and Justice Broadened

Against the background of climate change, for purposes of ecological agency, let me sketch briefly the potential uses and limitations of law. In a suggestive way, in view of the *khalīfah* figure, Maria Massi Dakake argues that the prime challenge is “to govern ourselves, to check our corruptive tendencies, both individually and collectively.” For

⁴⁶ Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, 1:4. See M. Abdurrahman Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mysteries of Prayers* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2018).

⁴⁷ Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, 2:1; Denys Johnson-Davies, trans., *Al-Ghazālī on the Manners Relating to Eating* (Kitāb ādāb al-akl) (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2000).

climate ethics, her claim strikes a familiar chord. “Recognizing anthropocene power acknowledges that managing earth systems as influential participants means learning to manage ourselves,” claims Willis Jenkins, inquiring provocatively, “Do we know how to do that? Can we be taught?”⁴⁸ At the limits of understanding, Dakake believes religious communities provide privileged contexts to support spiritual striving “in which our innate goodness can be nurtured and our potential for destruction and corruption held in check.”⁴⁹ In response to the ecological crisis, she stresses the latter, evoking a sense of the angels’ wariness concerning Adam as *khalīfah*: humanity must “work to actively and continuously protect themselves and the rest of creation from their potential for corruption.” With respect to ecological agency, in sum, she develops the idea that the challenge primarily comprises “in large measure a duty to protect this creation from himself and his own potentially destructive and ‘corrupting’ capacities.”⁵⁰

In this vein, Dakake emphasizes the prohibitive function of divine law. As she reflects upon the *khalīfah* passage in Surah al-Baqarah, pointedly, she challenges how Muslim perspectives habitually fail to be reminded of the ecological wisdom in these verses. In mainstream exegetical traditions, as she notes, the truth about humanity’s ecological agency is neglected. Regarding Surah al-Baqarah, she argues, regretfully: “they overlook the darker and more ominous reality of human exile from God—one that, as the angels seem to know, will indeed entail bloodshed and corruption.” Thus, in a primary sense, Dakake seeks to expose the “corrupting” effects of human activities (*fasād fī al-*

⁴⁸ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 3.

⁴⁹ Dakake, 112–13, 114.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 104, 108, 114, cf. Q 7:19–21. The use of “sin” in Islam, especially relating to Christian theology, can devolve into controversial debates. Based on this scholarly article, and the commentarial tradition of this specific Quranic passage, what is so remarkable is that Dakake engages the ecological dimensions of “sin” as it is presented in the scriptural accounts of Adam and Eve, in both Genesis and the Qur’ān.

'ard), indicating anthropogenic and root causes that are manifestly laid bare to induce a virtue response. Given climatic imbalances and human excesses, whether intentional or not, proper relations between God, humanity, and the land are disrupted. In accord, as a Muslim, she is reminded of the Quranic reiteration of earlier "negative examples," who had broken covenants. She insists human beings, at our peril, must not forget the effects of their actions. A question arises: Does orienting virtue responses toward law solely serve a prohibitive purpose?

The primary purpose of law, according to Ghazālī, is different. While law renders divine commands into act-based imperatives, Ghazālī interprets law according to a more transformative purpose. In a sense, by following in the path of God, he assumes the vocation of humanity can become realized.⁵¹ According to Ghazālī, the gratuitousness of divine mercy can be interpreted as the overarching purpose of the law. As lawful practices conform seekers in accordance with divine commands, thereby certain actions draw humanity into the gratuity of God's divine mercy. As a gift, due to divine assistance, law meets human needs. The purpose of law and lawful practices, thus, is meant to *guide* human reason and human actions toward knowing God, also potentially actualizing a sense of this divine gift. For instance, in the *Ihyā'*, Ghazālī names "repentance" (*tawbah*) as the disposition that initially paves the way toward developing "spiritual" virtues. Repentant habits, in a non-punitive sense, enable seekers to learn patience, thankfulness, fear and hope, the spiritual value of poverty, renunciation, self-examination, vigilance, love on the path toward attaining loving union with God. These are dispositions law cannot teach; and

⁵¹ For this background, see Tim J. Winter, "Introduction," in *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul & on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, trans. Tim J. Winter (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1995).

yet each disposition also indicated the uses and limitations of law. In a different key, law enables seekers to follow in the path of God's gratuitous mercy.

From a Christian perspective, practically speaking, this emphasis can engender at least two important shifts regarding ecological agency, and specifically "respect for nature." For Thomas, first, just actions are only measured according to the goodness of human reasons, but primarily according to divine reasons as God is the "the first rule." In this way, justice in accordance with law may broaden to characteristically acquire an understanding of the gratuitous mercy, compassionate care, and broader concern for the communities, including the "community of the universe." Since God wills friendship with humanity, therefore, cultivating virtues may generate virtuous practices that renew and reconfigure how flourishing is understood. Related to humanity's ecological roles, second, the theological virtue of charity according to Thomas lies at the "root" of all the virtues. In this way, accordingly, Thomas argues: "Charity likens us to God by uniting us to Him in the bond of love: wherefore it surpasses mercy, which likens us to God as regards similarity of works."⁵² Traditionally, works of mercy are practiced with special concern for the needy, the poor, and the desperate. As we may begin to appreciate, considering climate change, practicing works of mercy must acquire attunement regarding an ecological dimension. In response to climate change, for example, welcoming the stranger will need to appreciate shifting and destabilizing conditions that necessitate dislocation. Feeding the hungry, furthermore, could also supply a motivating reason to practice care for creation. In this vein, as a matter of common goods, cultivating ecological virtues may be derived from a broader sense that human flourishing depends on practicing respect for nature.

⁵² Cited at *ST IIa IIae* q30 a4 ad3. See also q30 a1 co, q30 a4 ad2.

By reconfiguring climate ethics, moreover, this connection between law and virtue cultivation could deepen reasons to cultivate “respect for nature.” In Surah al-Anām (“the Cattle”), it is asserted that other animals, both on the land and those with wings in the sky, constitute “communities like you” (*umum amthalakum*, Q 6:38). Normatively, from a Quranic perspective, this verse serves as one of the clearest instances that advocates for a profound respect of ecological communities. In a sense, this Quranic verse resonates with a reason that Pope Francis extended, when he wrote: “This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world” (no. 68). For Dakake, interestingly, the revealed truth of this relates to the hegemonic urge to intervene, govern and regulate; rather, she writes that non-human creatures “have their own direct relationship with God and forms of worship, and thus seem to be in no need of governance or mediation with God.”⁵³ In this sense, the basis for ecological agency is not grounded necessarily in personhood, but in the power and ability to relate and create communities. For Muslims and others, Dakake urges the lesson involves caring to try to understand the integrity of these ecological communities.

4.1.6 Developing Perspectives: Attunement as Reconfigured Prudence

A lack of “attunement” impoverishes virtue perspectives from appreciating and respecting the goods that cohere ecological communities, and the links between human and ecological flourishing. Traditionally, classic virtue accounts have not assigned much importance to the ecological relevance of prudence. Environmentally, prudence has become a virtue term that has fallen into disrepute. For instance, Pope Francis rebukes

⁵³ Dakake, “To Be *Khalīfah*,” 112.

those, including “committed and prayerful Christians,” who reject ecological virtues in the name of prudence, “with the excuse of realism and pragmatism” (no. 217). In some perspectives, typically, the problem with prudence is that it counsels self-interests. Putatively, a prudent reason for respecting nature is that it offers the best prospects for securing human welfare and may offer the means to ensure greater stability in the institutions of justice. For ethical perspectives that struggle to respect nature on its own terms and for its own sake, it is worthwhile to examine motivating reasons for action. In a virtue-rooted approach, it is possible to emphasize differing motivating reasons, and to consider habitual responses.

Turning to prudence, as a matter of practical wisdom, the virtue is not always understood to act in an identical manner. For Ghazālī, once practical wisdom (*hikmah*) is “harmonized” with the other moral virtues, perceiving right from wrong, justice is realized. In a Thomistic sense, similarly, prudence is the virtuous disposition tasked with governing inclinations and dispositions to their fuller realization for the sake of justice. In addition to special roles, however, the basic scope and thus purpose differ. In Ghazālī’s summary of virtue ethics, as explicated in the *Mīzān*, the various parts of prudence barely sketched. Its scope there concerns primarily the household. On the other hand, in a Thomistic sense, prudent actions are more socially concerned. Directed toward setting forth and realizing public goods and choosing the right means for the sake of others, prudence serves many roles, including variously potential and subjective parts. From a Thomistic perspective, the purportedly “prudent” responses that Pope Francis aptly criticizes bear closer affinity to what Thomas describes as “negligence,” a lack of due concern that correspondingly fails

to act rightly.⁵⁴ As one extreme that prudence intends to avert, this vice is opposed by another tendency, “imprudence,” a vicious disposition that is unable to choose rightly the means.⁵⁵ By dialogue, the prudent point may pertain to the overlapping import of cultivating attunement in both contexts, that is, by parents in household settings, and also by cooperating with right actions and laws that attune others to the needs for reconciling human and ecological flourishing.

For climate ethics, shortly, we shall turn to the green sister movement, whose example materializes some necessary means for responding more justly to climate change. As recently as 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) determined that more effective responses require: (1) developing more sustainable land use, (1a) especially by adopting regenerative methods, such as permaculture, and must (2) reduce food waste and (3) avoid meat consumption. In addition, the IPCC advised other integral developments in adaptive responses, with special commitments to (4) improve potential poverty reduction, and (5) enhance food security—both in the future and more immediately.⁵⁶ As a case study in the section that follows, the green sisters offer a reform project that demonstrates how to reconfigure prudence. Moreover, their actions illustrate various ways of practicing respect for nature. If it is right to claim that developing prudence requires role models, from their deep experience and practical wisdom, their example enables us to appreciate the challenge of climate justice. In accord, as they have learnt to

⁵⁴ See *ST* IIa IIae q54 a1.

⁵⁵ See *ST* IIa IIae q54 a2, and q53.

⁵⁶ IPCC, “Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems,” 8 August 2019, available online at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/> (accessed 8 August 2019).

reinhabit their community, they offer focus on the global, ecological, and intergenerational issues of injustice, while providing terrestrial keys.

Think of the lives of farmers, and the role prudence must play. For Rourke, this attuned form of prudence is exemplified in her grandfather, a farmer in upstate New York. For her, exemplary is the way her grandfather exhibited a special kind of attentiveness and readiness to adapt according to seasons and the changing conditions of the fields. Ecologically, it lends a glimpse toward ways prudence can be developed. “Habitual, careful observation builds awareness or attentiveness,” she explains as the prudential capacity to tend to others is exhibited if “an agent has habitual and well-placed sensitivity to situations, contexts, environments, and people.”⁵⁷ In the case of her grandfather, she remembers lessons in how prudence is enacted with respect to ecological agency. Cultivating a more attuned prudence, in a sense, requires “being open to or having an awareness of the thick description of a situation,” and, second, thus practically disposes us to embody “the readiness to be changed by that which is received or noticed.”⁵⁸ Although her grandfather in his very specific role as a farmer demonstrates these qualities, conceivably, it is also possible to cultivate this attuned kind of prudence in how we can act more justly according to the various roles as citizens, members of a household, consumers, as well as in religious participation. For Christians, particularly in ecclesial life, a key insight is the “co-relation” that is signified between the fields and Rourke’s grandfather. In a Thomistic sense, this understanding of the relation develops in terms of cooperation, rather than domination.

⁵⁷ Nancy M. Rourke, “God, Grace, and Creation: Shaping a Catholic Environmental Ethics,” in *God, Grace, and Creation*, ed. Philip J. Rossi, 222–34 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), cited at 224–5. For context, see Louke van Wensveen, “Environmentalists Read the Bible: The Co-Creation of a Community, a Story, and a Virtue Ethics,” in *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Context: Theology, Culture, and Politics in Dialogue*, ed. Shin Chiba et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 216.

⁵⁸ Nancy M. Rourke, “Prudence Gone Wild: Catholic Environmental Virtue Ethics,” *Environmental Ethics* 33, no. 3 (2011): 249–66, cited at 250, 251.

Why choose the green sister movement? In the pursuit of ecological conversion, practically speaking, attunement necessarily must shift ways we understand prudence. In general, Christian habits must learn dispositions that help prudence integrate ecological concerns, but also include non-human creatures within visions of flourishing. “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not,” Pope Francis asserts, “an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (sec. 217). In a vocational sense, having already responded to the call of justice, the green sisters may offer more subtle lessons in how they came to embody more attuned, and terrestrially sound habits. From a Thomistic standpoint, for example, their diligence particularly exemplifies the task of prudence that seeks to form and follow commitments.

4.2. *Reintroducing Green Sisters: Conversion and Reinhabiting Virtue*

Since 1994, when Mary Southard, C.S.J. created a group called “Sisters of the Earth,” the “green sisters” have developed into a relatively formal movement. This network of Catholic women religious, which spans North America—both the United States and Canada—has since its inception tried to self-consciously integrate ecological concerns into existing social ministries. At the same time, the movement has attempted to reflect upon this transformation and find the theological language for their renewed consciousness. Prefiguring the magisterial call for “ecological conversion,” this network has set a concrete course of social action. Cooperatively, their examples shed light upon how to deliberately renew moral agency in response to ecological crisis.

In the case study that follows, based on Sarah McFarland Taylor’s *Green Sisters*, we shall give special reference to this movement’s Dominican sisters. Ethnographic sources contribute a more concrete understanding and practical examples that aid in the

pursuit of ecological conversion. Pragmatically, green sisters confirm insights into how prudence is developed, McFarland Taylor writes: “On an experiential level, they find out what works and what does not and then proceed to make necessary adjustments.”⁵⁹

4.2.1. *Reinhabiting Tradition: Call of Conversion and Spiritual Landscapes*

Reinhabitation, as a narrative metaphor, describes self-conscious commitments to a sense of place but also reappraising basic quality of life. For Benedictine models of “attunement,” in this vein, it is conceivable to reinhabit contemplative disciplines. In Vermont, for example, the Green Mountain Monastery chose to adopt the term “reinhabitation” for purposes of communal correspondence and monastic identity. The term, it was decided, was appropriate for their context as it indicated the deliberate and patient ways that they are seeking to connect ecological concerns with their vows as committed members of monastic communities and particularly their self-understanding as Christian disciples. One summer morning, recalls Sarah McFarland Taylor, she and two nuns get themselves seated in an old Ford Tempo, the community’s car. At the wheel, Gail Worcelo, the Mother Superior, “takes up a small wooden mallet and strikes a meditation chime located on the dashboard.” The effect, as she recollects, is long-lasting:

The chime rings throughout the interior of the car, and all of us fall silent and bow our heads. The chime begins a period of silence in which we reflect on the earth’s resources that will be used in the course of operating this vehicle. We take time to be mindful of the effects of driving on all of creation and to be mindful that this practice must be used sparingly. Finally, we pray that no harm will come to other beings as a result of our driving and that no harm comes to us.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 20. This study is almost entirely unknown in Catholic theology. For two exceptions: Anne E. Patrick, *Conscience and Calling: Ethical Reflection on Catholic Women’s Church Vocations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 104–5; J. Matthew Ashley, “Reading the Universe Story Theologically: The Contribution of a Biblical Narrative Imagination,” *TS* 71, no. 4 (2010): 881n36. For a comparable type, see Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall, 3–21 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, cited at 115, see also 117.

Practices such as this are important for several reasons. First, such “ritualized” instances offer a space in which to reflect on their actions. Contemplatively, listening together in silence, they attempt to be more receptive. For the Benedictine nuns in the car, listening is connected to “obedience,” one of their vows. In a narrative sense, such contemplative practices foster attunement in relation to their sense of themselves within a distinctive narrative that Benedictine foundations provide. But it also reflects a change in how they inhabit their particular tradition. As an ongoing dialogue with God, in turn, their respectful listening is grounded in the stability of their monastic commitment to a specific, hospitable place, and thus attempting to preserve its ecological integrity.

The corporate character of “attunement,” as alternatively found among Dominican sisters, is different from the virtuous sense of attunement—its stable and contemplative cast—that is attributable to the Benedictine practice. Dominican spiritual identity, first of all, is rooted in a calling to study and preaching. It is shaped not by where they live, but in bringing the fruits of their contemplation to those with whom live, that is, those whom they teach and for whom they preach. Prudent expressions of moral agency, in other words, are directed through careful study and public preaching. Therefore, we should expect the way they demonstrate attunement to look very different from the stable and contemplative cast that is found in Benedictine practice. Considering their tradition, moreover, they are attempting to find ways to articulate the moral grammar of virtue ethics, but grounded in a distinctly terrestrial manner. To understand a Dominican approach, it is important to appreciate how attunement is determined by communal narratives that shape and inform their shared sense of who they are.

Through careful study, Dominican biblical exegetes are seeking to narrate this attentive shift according to the prophetic imagination. Despite much criticism that the font of anthropocentric attitudes lies in the biblical canon, especially Genesis, biblical imagination characterizes their collective response. Dominican sister Sarah Sharkey, for instance, draws upon the biblical inheritance to shape and deepen these newfound ecological sensibilities. In her reading, the canon provides constant reminders that absolute ownership of the land belongs primarily to God, not Israel. Similarly, Carol Dempsey reminds her readers that a covenantal relationship is integral for how biblical perspectives understand creation—that is, in a prophetic spirit.⁶¹ It becomes an indivisible aspect of vocational narratives in First Isaiah’s “peaceable kingdom,” and the communitarian union between human and ecological salvation as recognized in Second Isaiah. In the latter text, according to Sharkey, the call for prophetic action makes plain justice is transformative, involving a “call to help repair broken relationships in the world, in creation.”⁶²

For Sharon Zayac, the director of a 111-acre farm not far from Springfield, Illinois, part of her work involves caring and tending to the fields, and the other half of her mission includes adapting the farm for educational purposes. In her way, relationally, reinhabitation intends to enact very practical ends: “Reclaiming our image of an immanent God bound up with everything on this planet must become our metaphor for systemic living.”⁶³ Zayac’s

⁶¹ Carol J. Dempsey, O.P., “Hope Amidst Crisis: A Prophetic Vision of Cosmic Redemption,” in *All Creation Is Groaning: An Interdisciplinary Vision for Life in a Sacred Universe*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey and Russell A. Butkus (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), esp. 270–1, and 276–7. See also idem, “Creation, Evolution, Revelation, and Redemption: Connections and Intersections,” in *Earth, Wind, and Fire: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Creation*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey and Mary Margaret Pazdan, 1–23 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004).

⁶² Sarah Sharkey, O.P., *Earth, Our Home: Biblical Witness in the Hebrew Scriptures*, Conversatio series (San Antonio: Sor Juana Press, 2004), esp. 89–90.

⁶³ Sharon Therese Zayac, O.P., “In the Dominican Tradition: Creation Story” (M.A. thesis, St. Mary of the Woods College, 2001), 54.

approach is centered on religious insights that she reclaims from the origins of her community. Thomas himself addressed his theology of creation, she points out, with a Christian sense of the universe as the “primary revelation.” Tending to the farms, therefore, she supposes the Earth she is coming to know on those 111 acres infuses her with a deeper kind of attentiveness. Capable of revealing hidden ways that God acts, distinctively, the “community of the universe” may possibly instruct human beings on some necessary means and conditions for mutual flourishing.

In this way, from a Dominican perspective, attunement also seeks to combine action and contemplation. Enacting an insight like Pope Francis’s notion that creation is “a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness” (no. 12), Zayac and other Dominican sisters are forging a new connection with their community’s roots. By recognizing the “book of nature” as a compatible and even overlapping source of revelation, she admits that it is a “struggle reconciling what we are beginning to learn about the origins of life with both what we have grown up believing about nature and what we think our Church teaches us about creation.”⁶⁴ Even within her own church, some criticize her lessons in “eco-spirituality” as a form of heresy. However, she finds solace and inspiration in the fact that Thomas Aquinas, and Dominicans before him, sought to preach and teach against the Albigensian controversies for dualistic tendencies that separated spirit and matter—the former as good, the latter evil. From Zayac’s viewpoint, similarly, contemporary Christians tend to err in perceiving and treating the material world as fundamentally degraded. Just as Thomas argued, likewise, she understands she must unequivocally affirm the fundamental goodness of God’s creation.

⁶⁴ Sharon Therese Zayac, O.P., *Earth Spirituality: In the Catholic and Dominican Traditions*, Conversatio series (San Antonio: Sor Juana Press, 2003), 37, cf. McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 260.

Revering God's creation as a complementary "book" of revelation, Zayac is reminded of a lesson that was developed in the earliest patristic sources. Saint Francis of Assisi provides Pope Francis with this theological sensibility. The revelatory power of the universe is a theme not only used commonly in the history of science, as Naomi Oreskes rightly notes,⁶⁵ it recovers also particularly Christian insights. If faithfully and carefully read as an analogous form of "book," according to Thomas, creation offers a means for coming to understand its author, namely God. In his own way, Thomas roots this notion in scripture, specifically when God teaches Adam the "names" of creation. In a revived sense, governing a distinctively Dominican approach, the green sisters are similarly learning to "read" creation in a manner that seeks to understand God through both the "word," as found in scripture, and the divine "work" of creation.

4.2.2. *Improving Earth Literacy and Faith-Based Social Actions*

Numerous Dominican institutions are becoming sites for improving ecological literacy. In this sense, renewed appreciation for ecological agency is being integrated into their mission. At Genesis Farm, in Blairstown, New Jersey, great care is taken when gathering the seeds of native plants and "heirloom" species to ensure propagation for future generations. In some cases, seed-collecting focuses on assisting the succession of some species that are either rare or endangered. In 1980, Miriam MacGillis initiated a public-interfacing project at Genesis Farm, repurposing the property as an "Earth-literacy"

⁶⁵ Naomi Oreskes, "Introduction," in *Encyclical on Climate Change and Inequality: On Care for Our Common Home* (New York: Melville House, 2015), ix–x. For largely historical appraisals of this biblical tradition, dating back to patristic sources, see Jitse M. Van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions*, 2 vols., Brill's series in Church History (Boston: Brill, 2008). In the Islamic tradition, this "two-book" theory is following a basic distinction between the "ontological Qur'ān" (*al-qur'ān al-takwīnī*) and the "composed Qur'ān" (*al-qur'ān al-tadwīnī*).

program. Their purpose has shifted, more recently, to model “Earth ministries,” integrating ecological concerns in the spirit of mercy.

For Catholic social ethics, particular focus on agrarian reform is not a novel concept, particularly in the United States. In 1933, famously, the Catholic Worker (CW) movement with the leadership of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin clamored: “Back to Christ! Back to the Earth!” Their houses of hospitality moved from urban centers toward initiating communal farming projects, according to Maurin’s vision, so that “agronomist universities” might simultaneously break down barriers between poor and elite, homeless and educated. Similarly, in response to large-scale industrialization, Dominican priest Vincent McNabb articulated a call for the “return of contemplatives to the land.”⁶⁶

As a more holistic model of reinhabitation, these sites are seeking to teach others about how to recognize interconnections between quality-of-life and ecological integrity.⁶⁷ In ecclesial life, the “awkwardness” of celebrating Earth Day or blessing pets on the Feast day of St. Francis, states Willis Jenkins, “just underscores a fundamental ecological illiteracy in Christian worship.”⁶⁸ According to their terrestrial commitments, MacGillis and Dominican sisters at Genesis Farm demonstrated lessons and insights for integrating ecological concerns with faithful practice. In focus, the educational purpose seeks to engage the public on the wider benefits of particular activities. Many who visit the farm, according to MacGillis, hunger to reconnect with how food is produced and are even interested in developing their home gardens to engender greater food production. Guests, participating in the farm’s seed-saving mission, relate to a vast network throughout North

⁶⁶ Vincent McNabb, O.P., *Old Principles and the New World Order* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942).

⁶⁷ For a virtue perspective of “holistic thinking,” see chapter 3.

⁶⁸ Willis Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 312.

America. In view of climate change, these relatively small measures can be invaluable for building resilience and improving food security.

Food, moreover, serves as a potentially fruitful site for restoring a sense of moral agency in response to climate change. As consumers, humans are now confronted with seemingly infinite choices when it comes to food. However, discerning amid myriad choices can concentrate and develop new ways of being attuned. At Earth-literacy centers, Miriam MacGillis explains, the challenge of teaching more sustainable lifestyles is brought into everyday choices about what is properly grown and how to eat more justly. Food, therefore, is regarded as key to ecological agency and can ground, speaking practically, new commitments to reinhabitation. A holistic sense to this question is provided at Genesis Farm where through communal workshops MacGillis and her team provides holistic approach to “eating low.” Meat consumption in the United States, as widely recognized, is a chief contributor to the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions. Beyond a strictly national concern, increased global hunger for meat is driving wide-scale destruction of Amazon rainforests. It is a fact that prompted the Amazon Synod to make explicit an intention to “change our eating habits” and for “adopting a more modest lifestyle,” particularly out of respect for the people of the Amazon.⁶⁹

Like MacGillis, green sisters (at least a vast majority) are practicing vegetarians. Since the 1990s, as a rule, green sisters have observed measures to conscientiously reduce their overall consumption of meat. Although vegetarian habits are not “mainstream” in the Christian tradition, green sisters often use the language of the common good to ground this

⁶⁹ Amazon Synod, “The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology,” sec. 84: “New paths for promoting integral ecology: Prophetic questioning and a message of hope for the whole Church and the whole world.”

commitment and support a certain “broadening” of what just actions mean. Another decisive criterion that green sisters initiated in the 1990s—and that has become widely established—is the concept of “food miles.” Based on the simple notion of how far food travels from its point of origin to the “plate,” this criterion is employed to determine the carbon footprint of specific habits of consumption more adequately. For them, on ethical grounds, a closer source offers a better option.

The green sisters trace their increased consciousness around environmental justice as part of the legacy in ecological awakening that Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* spawned in the United States. More than simply raising environmental awareness, Carson’s classic detailed the dangers of the bioaccumulation of pesticides, specifically DDT, in soil, water, and food.⁷⁰ Responsively, green sisters have participated in numerous actions, ranging from nonviolent civil disobedience to stakeholder advocacy to protest and reject practices that permit toxic bioaccumulation. For many participants in the movement who first forged commitments to promoting justice as equality in the civil rights movement, in a deep concordance with that struggle, they seek to reflect anew on this call of justice. Succinctly, Dominican sister Chris Loughlin explains: “So our lives became *practiced* at bringing about change through personal experience and through communal experiences.”⁷¹ From the margins, practicing special concern for the poor, they learned how to speak boldly and advocate so that effective actions might be taken to promote the common good.

Take, for example, Dominican Sister Patricia Daly, a forerunner in developing the concept of “corporate responsibility.” In McFarland Taylor’s regard, Daly herself typifies

⁷⁰ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring and Other Writings on the Environment*, ed. Sandra Steingraber (New York: Library of America, 2018). For a case-based approach, see Willis Jenkins, “Toxic Wombs and the Ecology of Justice,” in *Future of Ethics*, 190–231.

⁷¹ McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 30, 304 n24.

“a longstanding tradition of steadfastness and courage.”⁷² Thus, as a key figure in the growth of shareholder activism, Daly typifies an approach that is committed to the belief that fostering the common good requires greater involvement with corporate decision-making, not less. Influenced by Carson’s alarming exposition, Daly has consistently offered reminders of the injustice and suffering that can happen due to the widespread bioaccumulation of toxic waste into the food chain. In 1998, addressing former CEO Jack Welch at a General Electric shareholder meeting, she challenged both him and the corporation to become better leaders in cleaning up polychlorinated biphenyl (or PCBs). For over four decades, the corporation manufactured products that contained PCBs until the chemical was banned in 1977. The corporation had also made it common practice to dump this toxic chemical into regional waterways. In 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency decided that GE must dredge and clean up the Hudson River valley of PCBs, other toxic byproducts, and contaminants that the company had deposited there from the run-off of their plants. In kind, Patricia Daly contended that a sense of responsibility should summon GE to take the initiative in cleaning the nearby Housatonic River and its watershed, which their Pittsfield plant had abutted until its closure. Challenging Welch and GE, as also director of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Daly related health impacts, risks, and implications of this carcinogenic waste that her fellow sisters confronted in their social ministries with neighbors throughout the region.⁷³

Bioaccumulation of toxins is not directly attributable for the issue of climate change. In a rapidly changing climate, however, the language of the common good challenges the notion that protecting creation solely concerns international deliberations.

⁷² Ibid., 60.

⁷³ For a transcript, see McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 52–5.

Pragmatically, moreover, Daly exemplifies the strategic character of prudential judgment, advocating for measures that would heal injustices due to toxic human disruptions. As McFarland Taylor suggests, the use of virtue ethics specifies the basic characteristics, associated narratives, and solidarity with others that comprises the means and conditions for promoting the common good. Typically, the basic idea of “respect for nature” has become characterized as a virtuous trait since a newfound appreciation disposes us toward actions that preserve and promote ecological integrity. More holistically, attunement can further stress a relational nexus between humanity and non-human creatures. Until the encyclical *Laudato si’*, these two criteria served as the minimum standard that Catholic social teaching had judged adequate to build “respect for nature.”⁷⁴ Concretely, in cultivating an ecological praxis, green sisters offer practical lessons in the need to *restore* and *repair* ecological relations. As the GE case underscores, the decisive act to accept domination means that relations are not repaired, and the human lives are further imperiled.

4.2.3. Repurposing Moral Inheritances: Religious Lands Conservancy

Land serves as a crucial organizing principle in this communal movement, as particularly evident in initiatives for purposes of conservation. While Genesis Farm is a prime example of a site that has become repurposed for educational and ministerial purposes, the Religious Lands Conservancy Project (RLCP) inaugurates a new chapter in how lands belonging to religious communities have become integrated within this reformed sense of religious identity and mission. The guiding purpose of this regional project unites various religious communities to “preserve common and complementary values on the

⁷⁴ See *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 34. Short on specific details, these principles had little impact on its reception, see Charles Curran, Kenneth Himes, and Thomas Shannon, “Commentary on *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (‘On Social Concern’),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes et al., 415–35 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

land.” A sign of institutional change, communal lands are preserved as “land trusts.” Historically, often by design, religious communities developed rural sites as places of spiritual retreat. Thus, it was meant to withdraw and effectively separate themselves from their ministries. However, religious land trusts provide a more open, inclusive model that renews broader engagement with distinctly *social* benefits.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis urges that land ought not be restricted solely as “private property,” but invested for wider social benefits. In this regard, Catholic social teaching means to respect the right of private property, but not its glorification at the expense of the common good. In principle, Pope Francis explicates, the “universal destination of good” must surpass any moral claims to private property (sec. 93). Socially, in addition, the purpose of lands is meant to serve more widely the common good insofar as the basic needs and freedoms of others are served. From a theological viewpoint, this social purpose challenges cultural norms, arguing the case for the “subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods” (sec. 93). In this way, the poor can benefit from the “universal destination of goods.” In an intellectual sense, private property ought not be recognized as an absolute or inviolable right. Rather the “fruits” of the earth as a “shared inheritance” are meant for the benefits of all. In some significant ways, the development of land trusts anticipates and accords with this more universal vision of the social benefits of these properties.

These communal lands are treated as a public good, neither a public utility nor a narrowly conceived resource. In this spirit, the Dominican Alliance has stated its own intention to preserve their communal lands specifically as farmlands. For Dominican sisters, this decision was closely linked not only with their role as caretakers but also as

neighbors. Drawing on a sense of “covenantal care,” they express a deeper commitment to sustainable land use and recognition of a widened sense of community:

We, the Dominican Sisters of the Alliance, proclaim that the gifts of the Earth entrusted to our various congregations are indeed sacred because the Judeo-Christian tradition informs us that God created the human family to be part of the sacred web of life, [and] the land is the primary sustainer of life, therefore, the Earth and all her parts, are sacred.⁷⁵

As the case with many religious communities, there was increasing pressure both within the community and externally to sell rural lands so that resources and revenue could be transferred toward their urban ministries. However, noticing specific needs of neighbors, the commitment of the “religious lands” initiative is guided by the aim of accompanying small farmers. Experiencing the pressures of suburban development, in solidarity, the Dominican sisters sought to re-connect neighbors to a relation with the land.⁷⁶

In Plainville, Massachusetts, for example, Chris Loughlin transformed farmland that was bequeathed to the Kentucky chapter of the Dominican sisters into the Crystal Spring Earth Learning Center. An especially active leader in RLCP, Loughlin counsels other religious communities regarding how best to preserve farmland and other open spaces. What were once rather secluded, quasi-monastic settings, now are properties that encompass some of the only remaining acreage that is not “developed.” A key term in this movement is “recovery,” as the initiative toward preservation is situated within a context of what they reflect as “deep alienation in our culture” because of suburban sprawl and

⁷⁵ The original source of the Dominican Alliance Ethic was web-based and is no longer active. For the text provided, cf. McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 93 (as cited).

⁷⁶ The inception point is often related to the murders of Catholic missionaries Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan, Ita Ford, and Dorothy Kazel in El Salvador, in December 1980.

extensive developments. As part of a network, with eight other Dominican communities, Crystal Spring has attempted to revitalize an ecological model of service.⁷⁷

As commitments to open public space and preservation of farmland are becoming integrated into communal identity, green sisters lead the recovery of more fruitful relations to the land. For them, as integral of Christian identity, practicing “respect” for the land disposes them toward the sustainable, long-term usability of these sites. There are select areas where interference is prohibited. Overall, however, their engagement is immersive and aims to be cooperative. As a pilgrim on the land, Loughlin practices methods of cultivation that are committed to the long-term, regenerative health of the land itself. For climate ethics, this foundational notion that human ownership is not absolute provides an alternative model for developing a “land ethic.” From a basic premise, like the rest of creation, the land ultimately belongs to God. In a different key, thus, the trusteeship of humanity is offered. In *Laudato si’*, from a biblical basis, Pope Francis also articulates some guidelines for the limitations of property, ownership, and authority. For instance, in Leviticus, Moses is told that the land belongs to God, and “you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lev. 25:23). In this movement, similarly, authority and freedom to act on entrusted lands is conditioned with primary responsibility to God and the common good.

4.2.4. Foodways as Crucial Sites for Reinhabitation

In response to climate change, food presents a useful site for restoring a sense of moral agency. If more attentive to eating, that is, what we eat, sources, we can be aware of the choices we make that are either directly attributable to a warming climate or to reducing greenhouse gas. In the United States, the agricultural sector is currently one of the greatest

⁷⁷ Ibid., 190.

emitters of greenhouse gases. Food movements enact and cultivate moral agency, according to Willis Jenkins, as they “attempt to unsettle and renegotiate values organizing broad cultural structures of relation.”⁷⁸ As a result, “foodways” become a particularly important domain. A foodway is not simply how or what humans eat. Rather, a foodway is a complex reality—partially a historical legacy, a cultural identity, and a traditional demonstration of ecological abundance that becomes manifest in a culinary dish. In Jenkins’s perspective, this is what makes eating practices potential sites where moral agency can be relatively exercised, especially “to develop a postnatural ecological politics in which humans have responsibility and nonhumans have agency.”⁷⁹ For climate ethics, in simpler terms, foodways prove how a warming climate implicates humanity. Anthropogenic climate change involves networks of agency that reflect distorted relations between humanity and non-human creatures. For Jenkins, critically, religious perspectives must acknowledge how they are already entangled within complex realities.

In *Feast: Why Humans Share Food*, for example, Martin Jones chronicles the rise of wheat in Christian Europe around the fifth century that, subsequently, determined patterns of agricultural production when Europeans colonized North America. Thanks to the Eucharist, Jones argues, the proximity of wheat to the “Christian Spanish soul” served as the prime reason why, despite ecological risks and demanding conditions, generations of conquistadors persisted in planting the crop. Whereas Amerindian communities, Jones tells us, “saw no virtues in wheat that could justify a movement away from maize” and

⁷⁸ See, e.g., Willis Jenkins, “Feasts of the Anthropocene: Beyond Climate Change as Special Object in the Study of Religion,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, no. 1 (2017): 69–81.

⁷⁹ For a comparative study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim food practices, see David Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). For constructive study in practical theology, see Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2018), and Kecia Ali, “Muslims and Meat-eating: Vegetarianism, Gender, and Identity,” *JRE* 43, no. 2 (2015): 268–88.

other ancient grains. For us, according to Jenkins, the basic point is magnified when we realize wheat is more than simply a religious “culinary aesthetic”; rather it crucially underscores how “a religious feast has become materially entangled with climate.”⁸⁰

In a practical sense, foodways demonstrate ways that manners, customs, and practices of eating, cooking, and cultivation are wrapped in a particular place, culture, and community. For context, however, these connections tend not only to be ignored, but violated. In the GE case, for example, prudential judgment should lead us to assume that releasing PCBs into waterways or burying them in landfills will have a deleterious effect on the fertility and health of local ecosystems, soil, and human bodies. From a theological perspective, being attuned to foodways, prudential judgment may also involve greater care for the actual preparation of food. Learning to act accordingly, in the view of Diane Roche, a sister of the Sacred Heart, is one way that everyday practices and disciplines may become more “sacramental.” In this sense, she explains that certain actions become “external signs of an internal awareness of interconnectedness.”⁸¹ At Crystal Spring Earth Learning Center, in this sense, Loughlin and other sisters used to offer a class to the public that re-examines cooking as a “sacred act of working.” Pragmatically, Taylor describes a key shift in their spiritual vision: “sisters’ reinhabiting the ‘small details’ of everyday life constitutes a strategy of transforming the status quo of religion and culture by modeling workable, greener alternatives.”⁸² With keen awareness of the life-giving power of divine grace, in a mysterious way, they suggest bread baking exemplifies a latent sense of the “living body.”

⁸⁰ Martin Jones, *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 270–72, cf. Jenkins, “Feasts of the Anthropocene,” 70.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 96, 100.

⁸² McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 97.

As product of “ancient living tools” (i.e., soil and sun), dough is enabled and its “peculiar features give way to form: a rise is anticipated.”⁸³

Food, therefore, offers proximate, tangible, and potentially fruitful ways to examine ecological agency with complex issues of climate change. For Carol Coston, in pursuit of a more encompassing vision of flourishing, “good food grown carefully and prepared with joy and sensitivity” challenges cultural norms. In a religious sense, by way of recognizing its preparation, a meal can occasion an “act of thanksgiving.”⁸⁴ This sense of tasting and sharing meals also lends a glimpse of God’s goodness, while reconnecting moral agency with practicing care for the creation. “Using embodied things like bread, wine, oil, water, they name and celebrate grace for a moment,” reflects Elizabeth Johnson, a transformed attentiveness occasions to “allow the grace of God, everywhere present, to break through in this or that instance.”⁸⁵ As for the dough, the conversion is signified in the anticipated “rise”—made possible with the cooperation of human hands. “Your hands,” green sisters teach, “create more tension, resistance, change.” The hands, therefore, are filled with a distinct power to creatively cooperate.

In the green sister movement, furthermore, permaculture strategies are adopted and incorporated to respect and improve health, and the health of the soil. This approach seeks to create a regenerative habitat. Permaculture, basically, is a practical concept that seeks to understand how ecological relations flourish through mutual benefits. Interconnections between different species, it is assumed, gradually foster more balanced and fruitful

⁸³ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 41. See also Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, “Creation and an Environmental Ethic,” in *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 104–24. For a reformed view, see Nelson Reveley, “Eating: Glimpsing God’s Infinite Goodness,” in Hartman, *That All May Flourish*, esp. 60–1.

relations also can support basic human needs, without harming ecological well-being. Regarding a particular site as itself a complex and sophisticated “system,” such strategies intend to preserve and enable more just and resilient foodways. First and foremost, a permaculture approach involves critical attention toward cultivation of food through edible perennial plants, usually those that are native to regions and well adapted to climate zones. Practically speaking, across numerous sites, green sisters adopted permaculture lessons to reinhabit roles on their communal sites. “For organic farming sisters,” McFarland Taylor remarks, “cultivating the land and cultivating a new culture of vowed religious life both entail a valuing of diversity, flexibility, and mutually enhancing combinations.”⁸⁶ In principle, regenerative practices are viewed as essential for renewing virtue.

In this regard, actual examples of this shift are available, and their actions lay forth guidelines that fulfill what the 2019 IPCC has advised as one of the most critical steps for combatting climate change. To this end, communally, green sisters have cultivated habits of careful observation and sought to develop a “circular,” cooperative model of economy for the ecological communities to which they are entrusted. Moreover, they are forerunners to the recognition of the moral magisterium that this model of production is “exemplary,” especially for its “capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products” (no. 22). Moreover, they also prefigure how to practice “respect” for creation in a way aligned with the concept of integral ecology, which embraces “sustainable use” and prioritizes “each ecosystem’s regenerative ability in its different areas and aspects” (no. 140).

For example, at Sanctuario Sisterfarm, situated in the marginal landscape of the Texan hill country, Coston and her fellow co-founder Elise García promote a “spiritual

⁸⁶ Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 208

truth,” that is, the “inherent call for us to live in consideration of the common good of all creation.”⁸⁷ First, Coston confesses that she needed to unlearn some habits of mind, and critically reevaluate some working assumptions as she began tending to the soil. For instance, when she used to garden, Coston recalls, “order” was paramount. She associated this principled notion systemically with straight lines. But, as she has come to recognize in her ecological praxis, she had mistakenly believed that she was the one who needed to impose a sense of “order” onto this habitat. She had misunderstood her role in this ecological community. She allowed the food forest that she was managing to begin to teach her about “order.” In her case, plants themselves became understood as teachers in productive “effects.” One of the biggest lessons that she has started to understand, with a strategic shift, is specific plants do well to grow with other plants, creating a fruitful “polyculture.” Simply, greater variation and diversity benefits a flourishing ecosystem

From the perspective of permaculture “design,” Coston attunes us to the fact that according to their management practices, indigenous communities cultivated particular “polycultures.” For example, in the Spiral Garden at Sanctuario Sisterfarm, they used to feature and promote the polyculture of the “Three Sisters,” namely, corn, beans, and squash (to which they added a native perennial called Gregg’s Mistflower). From what is currently known as northern Mexico to southern Canada, indigenous communities had developed this specific community of crops on an annual basis because each crop does not compete with the others but optimizes the others in some respects. Together, in community, these crops tend to thrive. In this entrusted sense, Sanctuario Sisterfarm also adopted indigenous insights to try to understand how some crops “prepare” the soil for later plantings. For

⁸⁷ Ibid., and 207.

example, by this method, rye is especially useful for planting strawberries. Learning this cultivation method, organically, green sisters in their praxis discover that specific species also plant well together with others, and so between them have a “special affinity.” Potatoes and horseradish, for instance, are a good example of two distinct species that “harmonize well with one another.” As a result, inter-planting and “companion planting” can “help both plants to flourish.” Analogously, this sense of complementarity also “works” in a spiritual way. Renewed and transformed with a “terrestrial” spirituality, McFarland Taylor writes, moral bearings shift as “a sacramental universe in which God’s presence in creation is somehow visible in created gifts.”⁸⁸

Entrusted with Sanctuario Sisterfarm, Coston and García had used this setting as a place of sanctuary for Central American refugees from civil wars in the 1980s. In this legacy, near the Texas-Mexico border, Sanctuario Sisterfarm practices attunement with special concern for “edge effects,” which refer to ecological dynamics in boundary-lands. In distinctive and fragile spaces, hospitable conditions are provided for various rare species. In kind, they are seeking to offer shelter to plant species that can only survive along these “edges” between different habitats. Furthermore, as co-founders of Sisterfarm, Coston and García have attempted to create some independence from the “biocolonial” strategies (e.g., GMOs) and multinational corporations that have accepted and intensified the dominating habits of human beings in the United States. Free of agro-corporations, the farm seeks to preserve organic, native, heirloom seeds, a legacy of this region that they are trying to save. It is also a project that, by design, is meant to be freely shared with local families, whose survival is still tied to subsistence farmers. Whereas those farmers may

⁸⁸ McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters*, 9–10, 28–51, esp. 45.

prefer monocultures, they are actively cultivating a fruitful interplay of diversity, complementarity, and cooperation into their visions of flourishing.

4.2.5. *Future-Making Habits:*

Communal Discernment and Transformative Aims

Concretely, how shall virtue ethics set the ends to deliberate more effectively in response to climate change? Although not an example from the Dominican sisters, an interesting case emerges among the sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mercy. In the early 2000s, this community embraced a different sort of concrete challenge, when they accepted the need to renovate and remodel their motherhouse in Monroe, Michigan. Upon completion, in 2003, the motherhouse was the largest renovation project to meet newly devised standards of sustainability. It is an early example of a LEED-certified building, and in 2021, the project remains a principal large-scale model for this concept of green-building design. However, perhaps more importantly, the community self-consciously developed a practical model of communal discernment for purposes of decision-making. As a community, it was decided, smaller discernment groups would steer their collective decision-making and propose what priorities and commitments should guide them, ultimately, to the completion of the construction project. To make sense of their situation, meet their needs, and imagine their collective identity moving forward, this discernment model focused on intricate details of the project, including geothermal dynamics for heating, ways to retrofit light fixtures, how to improve water efficiency, and reclaiming salvaged materials. If thinking through crisis requires not only new practices, but also reforming and renewing familiar ones, this discernment model provides a balanced sense of this challenge. Their model exemplifies the critical and constructive labor necessary for developing future-making habits.

4.3. *Rethinking Ecological Agency in Light of Climate Change*

How, then, shall we reason our way through fundamental differences about moral agency? While principles of justice might provide clarity and guide ethical attention, in a concrete way, the call of justice demands virtues that both motivate and contextualize specific practices in particular settings. For example, in medical settings, considerable attention is given to which metaphors of agency identify and represent necessary healthcare practices. Just as inhabiting a medical practice, in an analogous manner, Willis Jenkins argues the need and benefits of scrutinizing metaphors of ecological agency to cultivate new ways of living, thinking, and acting that inform what ecological well-being means.⁸⁹ As a minimum standard, he proposes that adequate metaphors ought to inform how we should treat ecological complexity, and lend itself to a more productive ecological praxis. To reconcile ecological agency, in a simplified manner, what I have suggested is *practicing* “respect for nature” incorporates these criteria, that is, ecological complexity and productive ecological praxis.

In this concluding reflection, I delineate distinct models of ecological agency that provide varying emphases on why and how we can practice respect for nature. In accord, each seeks to accept the challenge of climate justice, and thus keep in tension the concerns for what is owed to the poor, non-human creatures, and future generations. As a matter of practical reason, I resist the temptation toward further synthesis for three major reasons. From a Thomistic standpoint, in my viewpoint at least, general principles and rules tend to fail as the particularities of a particular ecological community are brought into

⁸⁹ Jenkins, “Assessing Metaphors of Agency,” 135, cf. James Childress, *Practical Reasoning in Bioethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), esp. 3.

consideration.⁹⁰ Ecological variability, alone, should suffice. Second, the right metaphor of ecological agency is not simply a matter of perspective, but it also depends in which specific ecological role humanity participates. We should anticipate, just as in the practice of everyday life that we act in various roles, that humanity also needs to act in various roles within the “community of the universe,” both as a whole and in specific ecological communities. Third, although unified, the diversity and plurality of humanity also serve as a ready reason why we should resist further synthesis, but rather offers these practical models to assist others. Considering climate change, we are permitted to prudentially revise judgments, re-evaluate assumptions, and renew the purpose of virtue ethics. What are the “metaphors of moral agency” that help address the challenge between demanding realities of radical inequality, ecological suffering, and generational injustice? Based on the prior reflection, we shall briefly appraise friendship, stewardship, parenting, and caretaker as four potential models of ecological agency.

4.3.1. *Towards the Ecological Virtue of Friendship?*

“Friendship” currently receives significant attention as an ecological virtue in some perspectives of environmental virtue ethics, the environmental humanities, and more widely in the general public. For example, “Friends of the Earth,” a civil society organization in multiple countries, is dedicated to developing a sustainable human ecology that lives in harmony with others. Commercially, the term has also become grown from a fringe to a gradually more mainstream label, as companies promote products that are more “environmentally friendly.” In many significant respects, as a basis for ecological virtues, “friendship” itself provides enhanced awareness around relationality, mutuality, and

⁹⁰ See *ST Ia IIae* q94 a4.

correspondences that show how moral inheritances inform ecological agency. For example, in her poetry, the Mormon naturalist Terry Tempest Williams speaks of the land as “lover,” a vital connection that leads her to compare her home-state of Utah to the “Promised Land.”⁹¹ In a political manner, therefore, this notion gives seeds for further cultivating preconditions with respect to more harmonized relation between human and ecological flourishing. In opposition to exploitative, tyrannical habits, being friends with the Earth might reflect deeper attunement and a more fruitful manner of inhabiting the places where we live, breathe, and work.

For skeptics, like Ronald Sandler, grave dangers exist in the act of naming this virtue as the grounds for ecological virtues. What is lost in translation, Sandler worries, is specifically basic “responsiveness,” a robust understanding of mutuality, and verifiable conditions that “justify” friendship. Even if eudaimonistic outlooks bring to bear friendly dispositions, for the sake of human and ecological flourishing, he claims that these are fundamentally not reciprocated. From a Thomistic standpoint, he suggests that whereas friendship implies an actual relation that is based in mutual benefit, and a desire for the good of the other, the land does not possess the capacity for this reciprocal relation. For Sandler, the land lacks “reciprocal concern”—a basic criterion for enacting friendship. In early endeavors in environmental virtue ethics, either from ecocentric or anthropocentric outlooks, Sandler criticizes these shortcomings. Reflexively, moreover, he doubts that “friendship” correctly understands a positive stance from the standpoint of human agency. If an actual “history of benefit” exists between a person and her environment, he posits

⁹¹ Terry Tempest Williams, *Desert Quartet: An Erotic Landscape* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), cf. Sarah McFarland Taylor, “Land as Lover,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8, no. 1 (2004): 39–56.

“gratitude” as the disposition that properly registers this relation, not friendship. While we may try to descend into the mysterious depths of that question, simply, critics such as Sandler properly alert us to risk of anthropomorphizing the question of ecological agency. Do trees, rocks, animals, hills, and rivers truly love us? Sandler thinks not. For Sandler, friendship does not present a valid option unless the relation intelligibly aligns with a “background account of what makes a character trait a virtue.”⁹² According to Sandler, even a “competent and constant steward of nature,” such as the examples that are set forth in Miriam MacGillis, the green sisters, or Rourke’s grandfather, should not become considered friendship on philosophical grounds, alone. Understanding friendship specifically as an *ecological* virtue, by his view, is misguided because it would mistake other creatures as persons, and so capable of both knowing this relation and reciprocating acts of friendship. Fundamentally, therefore, becoming attuned may also require profound respect for the *otherness* in “the community of the universe.”

4.3.2. *Managing Ecosystems: The Responsibility Paradigm*

According to Willis Jenkins, if we are to continue defining ecological relations in political terms of management, this metaphor ought to be “more chastened and adaptive.”⁹³ The ethical challenge, therefore, is to learn how to be better managers and, judging according to reform projects the standard at which human activities should basically aim. In kind, from a Muslim understanding, Maria Massi Dakake comes to interpret the facts of planetary mismanagement considering the *khalīfah* figure as an abuse of human power. Harshly, in a contrasting light, the Earth reflects the manifestations of this gross mismanagement. Although she claims control is “not the job” of human beings to “govern”

⁹² Ibid., 13.

⁹³ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 11.

and “regulate” God’s creation, still, she claims that human beings must “manage” themselves to allow other creatures to survive and possibly thrive. In this way, shaped by history, the ecological crisis is cumulative result of multiple generations who have enjoyed an expansion of human power.

From this very general perspective, productively, the “chastened” managerial sense of stewardship demands that the facts of climate change consider these “accidental” powers and refocuses on “managing” the planet well. For Jenkins, it seems, the managerial paradigm is redeemable precisely if abuses of power are corrected and promises the more responsible exercise of human power. For those who prefer to think and act through this framework of responsibility, this macro-scale picture implicates why virtue matters in the practice of everyday life. Summarily, he suggests the plausibility that the “ecological register” exposes the need to adapt locally: “Species responsibilities could then exert adaptive pressures on received accounts of virtue, as persons launch practical experiments that seek to deepen their understanding and realization of the good life.”⁹⁴ In response to the “wounds” of the planet, he supposes, moral uncertainty might still yet become a source for adaptive moral learning. As a “wicked problem,” climate change confounds the meaning of love and justice in a planetary system that diffusely distributes the consequences of seemingly insignificant actions. Resolutely, nevertheless, Jenkins explicates a Christian perspective that “opens new possibilities of living the faith by asking how God acts for the world of atmospheric power by summoning people into concrete relations of love and justice.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, 23.

In view of manifest signs of environmental degradation, still, urgent questions concern whether human beings will assume and accept this responsibility, or not. If presented in possibly the wrong key, as Jenkins acknowledges, this chastened paradigm might facilitate humanity's hegemonic urge and permit insufficient resistance to human domination. If so, despite best intentions, Dakake would be correct that humanity is tragically misguided in their efforts to control, govern, and regulate ecological processes. From a managerial standpoint, as Jenkins supposes, the right reasons for respecting nature ought to be immediately available in that failing to do so disproportionately impacts the poor and marginalized. In a similar sense, referring to the prophetic figure of Joseph, Catholic ethicist Stephen Pope claims: "In stewardship, we take care of our resources so that we can use them to enhance the lives of other people or other creatures." Properly exercised and understood, thus, being a steward entails "exercising responsibility for goods and people with whom we have been entrusted."⁹⁶ In this sense, Maria Massi Dakake—as well as other Muslims—might basically agree. From a Muslim perspective, she suggests more responsible expressions of "stewardship" should model how to restore covenantal "trust." In a terrestrial manner, the green sister movement offers prudential judgment an example of an intensive style of management that seeks to integrate concerns for poor, while investing themselves toward the support of living soil.

4.3.3. Parenting the Planet: A Proposed Virtue Model

From the hospitable Holocene to the uncertain Anthropocene, ways of relating human wellbeing and ecological integrity are experiencing a dramatic, material shift. In response, arguably, humanity must mature and develop newfound habits and capacities of

⁹⁶ See Stephen J. Pope, "Stewardship" in *A Step along the Way: Models of Christian Service* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), citing the figure of Joseph (Gen. 37-50); cf. Q 12.

care. If so, radically, Anthropocene conditions signify a different *relational* context. As such, climate ethicist Sarah Krakoff suggests parenting as providing a useful, “timely” and “appropriate” model— “though admittedly not perfect.” The use of such a model, as she argues, is that parenting stresses guidelines for how to live, discern, and act in rapidly changing conditions. Seemingly intractable, collective action problems gain a different appeal that ought not rely on insufficiencies of “individual rational self-interest.” Nor, she claims, does the conventional managerial paradigm suffice for the prudential judgment that enacts “daily and indefinite behavioral change.”⁹⁷ In these respects, not unlike a person who has become a parent, she proposes a metaphor of ecological agency that offers suitable ways to frame critical shifts that are needed particularly “in the way we conceive our role on the planet.” In effect, she adds this notion of parenting is relatable not only specifically in the way the metaphor narrates change. In addition, according to Krakoff, its benefits are twofold: firstly, as a stage of *human* development; secondly, as a definitive relation that enhances a developmental perspective.

Let us say more about its possible implications. First, as she proposes, parenting “allows us to think perhaps more objectively and less judgmentally, about the ways in which laws about the environment both reflect and reinforce the essential virtues and conflicts of a particular time and place.” Intrinsically connected with a *developmental* perspective, in a distinct but related way, parenting provides further *relational* focus that, according to Krakoff, circumvents problematic debates, such as whether humans are part

⁹⁷ Sarah Krakoff, “Parenting the Planet,” in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis Arnold, 145–69 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), cited at 146. This essay was originally published in the University of Colorado Legal Research Paper series, Working Paper Number 10-03, February 5, 2010.

of nature or not.⁹⁸ Analogously, just as new parents understand their purpose and role differently due to the birth of a new child, humanity broadly needs to adapt due to new ecological relations. In a dramatically different way, moreover, recognition of this new context may engender a sense of “parental care.” Focus might turn, consequently, toward concerns that ask how much life we can possibly support, as opposed to what nature can do for us humans that reinforces instrumentalist attitudes.

However, in terms of representing ecological agency, this framework falls prey to shortcomings. Willis Jenkins is reasonably critical, writing that this narrative “falsifies as much as it illuminates.” First and foremost, he criticizes, “humans have not given birth to a planet so much as we have domesticated a previously wild planet which in fact gave birth to us.” If we pretend to “parent the planet, simply, this basic fact is obfuscated. Moreover, humanity is actually “totally dependent on the nurturance of the biosphere.” Furthermore, despite supposed ascendancy of human power, this role reversal fails to address these profound and material differences. Critically, Jenkins also highlights a notable lack of clarity between interpersonal and ecological “registers,” as he objects: “how would ‘good parenting’ at the species level affect the ways that individual persons seek to flourish?” If humanity as a species must learn how to parent well, plainly, how does this redound specifically in concrete actions and social practices that shape this ecological disposition in a personal expression of moral agency?

Let us examine with differing understandings of the relation between parenting roles and virtue itself. The ambiguity that must be confronted may elucidate why familiar patterns of life could allow humanity to develop ways of flourishing. “Becoming a parent

⁹⁸ Ibid., 147. For the basis of her conceptual model see Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), cf. Krakoff, “Parenting,” 148–51.

is not a virtue in itself,” Jenkins explains, “but rather a dramatic new relational context that transforms a person’s sense of purpose and identity, which in turn gives shape to a new set of virtues and vices.”⁹⁹ However, hastening to critique, Jenkins misses a crucial point in Krakoff’s proposal. Preoccupied, attempting to strike a balance in the “double register,” Jenkins misinterprets how Krakoff describes this virtue-oriented approach. The misunderstanding affects how the figurative model is intelligible and the moral importance of its very practical purpose. In arguing for more careful bearings, Krakoff suggests parenting—if done well—is based in virtues of love and wisdom. In accord, “parenting” as a provisional model offers Krakoff ways of imagining more attuned, responsible expression of ecological agency. “Love, care, and wisdom are,” she writes, “according to [Erik] Erikson, the central virtues of adulthood.” Analogously, thus, these virtues ought to be sought also in corresponding ways with ecological relations. She judges, furthermore, parenting offers reasoning, language, images, and a developmental outlook on flourishing that informs climate ethics. In this sense, deliberation “does not depend on solely on a narrow version of rationality or consequences.” For climate ethics, eudaimonistic outlooks become based “on an account of a fully realized human life.”¹⁰⁰

From a virtue perspective, relatedly, questions might abound whether parenting itself serves as a viable way to model virtue or could serve as a potential virtue. This way of framing ecological agency, warns Willis Jenkins, misleads ethical attention. But, as Krakoff infers, good parenting can itself become virtuous endeavors, intrinsically connected as a vital part of a fully realized human life—for both the child, and we should

⁹⁹ Willis Jenkins, “Turn to Virtue,” 88. See also Mary Midgley, “Individualism and the Concept of Gaia,” *Review of International Studies* 26 (2000): 29–44. In kind, ecocentric responses object humanity resembles the planet’s virus, not physician (another relational metaphor of moral agency).

¹⁰⁰ Krakoff, “Parenting the Planet,” 162.

not forget the parent. Ecologically, as a virtue figure, parenting would model caring dispositions, and an imperfect wisdom that grows and matures with experience. In time, this innate capacity for hope-filled love would seek to support—not disable—flourishment of those to whom one is entrusted. In significant ways, based in Dakake’s affirmation, the *khalifah* virtue figure also promotes a robust sense of “parental care,” drawing wisdom, compassionate care, and power from past generations—and even, as we shall explicate, resourcing an entrusted sense of care for future generations. Simply, though often far from perfected, habitual responsiveness assists parents in caretaking and may, in turn, habituate the child relatedly. Moreover, parenting affords reasonable “displacement of the self” that Krakoff regards as “key to moving beyond the ‘mental de-formation of self-absorption.’”¹⁰¹ By virtue of “care,” thus, climate ethics mediates extremes of domination and indifference. It is reasonable to assume that, as a theoretical model, parenting empathically inclines climate ethics toward developing capabilities in a particular habitat—not every habitat.

The very practical purpose of parenting as a model of ecological agency seems to also embrace the need of balancing careful attentiveness with moral uncertainties and ambiguities. Rooted in experience, moreover, parenting is primarily interested in whom children are becoming. For climate ethics, Krakoff uses the metaphor to register the fact that many people in view of climate change are already “changing their daily habits,” just as young parents would with a newborn. This insight might offer nuanced reasons for restating how we should characterize collective action problems. To the extent that we are examining daily habits, everyday choices, and social patterns, we are seeking ways of cultivating ecological agency more carefully. Some may object that parenting simply

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 188.

exchanges one metaphorical model that imports a basic structure of domination and power for another. But, arguably, could not parenting dispose climate ethics to imagine respect for other forms of agency-asserting ways of being, relative independence and nurture autonomy that do not lose touch with the social fabric of collective relations? Or: In what kind of habitat does this community grow well and even thrive? How might this community of species become included and more integrated with other communities? The basic structure of relations need not dominate, in a crude sense; overall, rather, it could support growth and nurture integration of fellow creatures within a particular habitat.

If willing to think further with Krakoff, we should wonder whether the basic purpose is practical or fundamental. In fact, is her proposal more concrete and literal than theoretical and figurative? Indeed, she wishes climate ethics could usefully complexify the challenge of climate justice and re-narrate it. In common, she argues that it is objectively true that “we are creating daily habits and rituals that make our lives feel good and meaningful, irrespective of whether we will succeed at stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at levels that could avoid severe and volatile outcomes.” In a clarifying sense, her model presents virtue reasoning with resources for addressing collective action problem, while altering a basic sense of how ecological agency is practically enacted. Contrary to Jenkins’s criticism, Krakoff explicitly names an emergent sense of parental care is exercised whenever a family inquires into the impact of increased household carbon emissions. On behalf of future generations, in this way, she identifies a concrete scenario in which a family intends to discern how they ought to become attuned and, relatedly, should take specific action in changing and reducing their energy use. Krakoff offers a

simple example explaining quotidian, domestic, and more personal expressions of agency that reflect shifts in understanding ecological agency.

Although often unrecognized, she insists that practical discernment and prudential judgment what promises to remodel understandings of ecological agency in personal choices, actions, and decision-making. Good parenting, thus, provides an imperfect but nonetheless useful paradigm for prudence, and cultivates attunement. In significant ways, in a figural sense, good parenting can elucidate other aspects that fill out actual ways to enact and practice “respect for nature.” Indeed, as Dale Jamieson states: “Respecting nature, like respecting people, can involve many different things.” If this general principle is valid, how much more it is pertinent concerning respect for children? Good parenting, at least, may set a relatable template. Practicing respect for creation, with a sense of “parental care,” prioritizes developing new ways of life and promoting more terrestrial habits of being to future generations.¹⁰²

A final possibility, for now, is “rematriation.” Incidentally, these initiatives lead in the return of primary land-use and trusteeship to indigenous peoples. In many parts of the world, including the United States, it already is taking place on smaller scales. If we cannot fathom how “parental” relations can reconcile human and ecological flourishing, traditional ecological wisdom of indigenous traditions offers invaluable resourcefulness.¹⁰³ Strategizing right ways of thinking about relations with other habitats (“siblings,” etc.), pragmatically, good parenting offers guidelines to set attainable goals for mutual flourishing. Moreover, reflexively, practicing respect might also be fully aware of past

¹⁰² For a philosophical critique of the theoretical neglect of the family as the basic political unit, see Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

¹⁰³ Pope Francis *Ls'*, sec. 146, 179. For an Indonesian Muslim perspective, see Abidin Bagir, “Reading *Laudato si'* in a Rainforest Country.” An ethics of recognition is integral for dialogical framework.

failures in demonstrating respect, with perhaps overbearing, dominating tendencies. If relatively unexamined, as these social patterns may have been inherited from prior generations, decisive actions can seek forgiveness.

**4.3.4. *Toward a Reconciling Vision of Flourishing:
A Christian View of Humanity as “Caregiver”***

Finally, due to the *khalīfah* figure, a comparative theological perspective can consider a different model of “caregiving.” Considering this virtue figure, Maria Massi Dakake calls for us as human beings to not only to acknowledge “clay feet,” but also “to check our corruptive tendencies, both individually and collectively.” In Surah ar-Rūm, it is assured that “corruption” is not the final word on humanity, stating: “So that hopefully they will turn back” (Q 30:41). More attuned, she implies the vital import of repentance.

Revisiting the *khalīfah* figure in Surah al-Baqarah, mindful in this vein, the focus turns toward divine mercy in God’s readiness to forgive, and proper human response:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, ‘I am placing a *khalīfah* upon the earth,’ they said, ‘Wilt thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee Holy?’ He said, ‘Truly I know that you know not.’ And He taught Adam the names, all of them. Then He laid them before the angels and said, ‘Tell me the names of these, if you are truthful.’ They said, ‘Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge what Thou hast taught us. Truly Thou art the Knower, the Wise.’ He said, ‘Adam, tell them their names.’ And when he had told them their names He said, ‘Did I not say to you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you disclose and what you used to conceal?’ And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate unto Adam,’ they prostrated, save Iblīs. He refused and waxed arrogant, and was among the disbelievers. (Q 2:30–34)

Interestingly, the Qur’ān teaches later the source of this mistake is Satan, who “made them stumble therefrom” (Q 2:36). Although expelled, the two humans are forgiven by God: “We said, ‘Get you down, each of you an enemy to the other. On the earth a dwelling place should be yours, and enjoyment for a while.’” This small detail paves the way for a different

reading of divine power. “Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He relented unto him. Indeed, He is the Relenting, the Merciful” (Q 2:37). We might be surprised to notice, God is the one who initiates this exchange; awaiting the repentant Adam, who “returns.” As a result, divine power arises out of mercy, a gift freely given. In the case of Adam, from the Quranic perspective, this mercy offers a forgiveness and calls for reconciliation so, graciously, the relation between God and humanity is restored—as it ought to be.

In response to climate change, indeed, repentance requires collective actions that recognize the errors and failures specifically in the exercise of human agency. One value of this recognition is that human actions are intended to seek forgiveness, thus attempting reconciliation. Joint religious calls to “protect God’s creation,” which we noted at the outset of this chapter, resonate so deeply because across religious boundaries a shared acknowledgement is surfacing: roughly, it apprehends those human activities are disrespecting the generosity of God’s creative agency from which universe emerged and is sustained. In this light, whether intentional or not, careless actions of humanity have imperiled its balance. Distinctively, Islamic understandings of the crisis communicate profound concerns for the preservation of the communal fabric of non-human species, and their ecological communities. For Dakake, it is a neglected truth that the *khalīfah* figure reveals. Starkly, considering climate change, we might appreciate interconnections of human well-being with the health and flourishing of biodiversity.

This caretaker model, accordingly, also offers possible insights for addressing intergenerational justice. In the Qur’ān, as Maria Massi Dakake notes, God appoints humans also as “successors of one another on earth” (*khalā’if al-‘ard*, cf. Q 6:165). Temporally, this communal relation is based in the past and conceivably ought to extend

into the future. In an aspirational sense, from a Muslim perspective, she affirms that it can be empowering to affirm, inform and commend right ways of acting, but also to name actions to avoid and prohibit. In view of generational injustice, potentially, this caretaker model promotes the exercise of “parental care.” For the sake of the common good, especially as it concerns future generations, caretaking involves a trusteeship of the land and its well-being so that essential needs, basic goods, and fruitful relations with others can ensure a basic quality-of-life and serve human dignity. From a comparative perspective, therefore, the *khalīfah* figure offers Catholic social teaching promising ways to extend imperative questions of intergenerational justice in the service of climate ethics.

From a Catholic perspective, this caretaker model signals repentance as a disposition that ought to characterize Adam’s ecological role as *khalīfah*. In recognition of having “stumbled,” Adam turns back in repentant recognition of God’s mercy. In this respect, Muslim understandings of forgiveness and reconciliation draw upon Adam’s conversion for its insight in how repentance changes how we live. From a Quranic perspective, the only other figure who is identified as *khalīfah* is David, who “repented often” (Q 38:30).¹⁰⁴ As a prophet, kingly figure, and messenger in the Quranic perspective, David, too, exemplifies the dispositions that attempt to “set things right” (*islah*), in opposition to “corrupting the earth” (*fasād al-ard*). Repentance derives from the initiative of divine forgiveness. Mercifully, this divine initiative recasts us as persons who understand ourselves more fully as moral agents, remaking us as creatures whose actions may transform wrongdoings, failures, and “sin.” Aware of participation in “corrupting” tendencies, like David, this theological perspective indicates a different future is possible

¹⁰⁴ Han Hsien Liew, “The Hermeneutics of Legitimate Leadership: Qurtubī’s Commentary on Q 2:30 (the Adam Verse),” in *New Trends in Qur’anic Studies*, ed. Mun’im Sirry, 233–47 (Atlanta: Lockwood, 2019).

not in spite of past “sins,” rather because of penitent, reconciling practices that seek incorporation into a new economy of relations. If David’s vocation and “conversion” follows the pattern as set in Surah al-Baqarah, then, an instance of repentance centers the penitent on taking responsibility, returning in love, accepting forgiveness, attempting to earnestly commit to actualizing substantive change.

Less often is ecological reconciliation considered from the perspective of the Earth as victim. In the Islamic tradition, another resource may attune this sensibility, disposing climate ethics differently. In Surah az-Zalzalah, newfound sense of respect for gravity of human actions can arise if one seriously considers the Earth (*al-‘ard*) as having a sense of agency and is capable of telling its own stories. In the first verse, the land is called to give an account, “shaking” (Q 99:1); no longer victim and passive recipient of “corruption” (*fasād*), as the Qur’ān warns, there will be a day when finally “the earth yields up her burdens” (Q 99:2):

That Day she [viz., the earth] shall convey her chronicles; for thy Lord inspired her. That Day mankind shall issue forth upon diverse paths to witness their deeds. So whosoever does a mote’s weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does a mote’s weight of evil shall see it. (Q 99:4–8)

Eschatologically, anticipating Judgment Day, this surah provides a perspective that profoundly dignifies the “Earth” and its ecological communities as an “other.” In this regard, seeking forgiveness would require focusing on those who suffer from the attacks, dominating patterns, and “corrupting” tendencies. Regarding the Quranic perspective of ecological matters, the Jesuit Islamicist Thomas Michel remarks: “Some images are new and vivid and invite the reader to renewed examination of our indifference or irreverence toward the divine message found in nature.”¹⁰⁵ In such instances, he suggests, Christians

¹⁰⁵ Michel, “Ecology,” 173.

ought to seek understanding: What might this perspective mean on its own terms? What does it mean for Muslims? What truth has God planted in this wisdom? How can we discern movements of the Holy Spirit?

For climate ethics, generally, endeavors to imagine justice for the Earth can seem either unintelligible or incomprehensible. An integral understanding that this caretaker model can contribute is the intersection between the injustices of climate change, as it particularly concerns the poor, who contribute the least to its causes and yet are impacted the most, and to exploring the more specifically ecological injustices. What are the places most damaged, degraded, disrespected because of humanity's irreverent actions? In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis suggests that from the perspective of the poor we may more ably hear the cries of the Earth. While this is no less true, the Islamic perspective also sheds some light on the possible agency of the Earth itself, who can tell its stories if we give witness more profoundly to its signs. As exemplified in the green sisters movement, sometimes we need to allow the Earth to speak for the injustices that we are committing, especially as it affects the poor and marginalized. If we permit the Earth teach us its virtues, it is possible to rectify these terrestrial habits.

In the Anthropocene, forgiveness does not yet condition reconciliation. In serving very practical ends, instead, the credibility of forgiveness gains traction as the possibility permits climate ethics to confront troubling issues. For informed, concerned, and well-intentioned persons, seeking forgiveness provides active ways to relate distinct kinds of "terrestrial" habits and abilities to name efficacious practices that change us as human beings. Thus, lest we forget, repentance acknowledges our systemic involvements in

“corrupting the earth.” Materially, this process could enact a transformed sense of ecological agency that, radically, draws us into participation with God’s creative agency.

In this light, advancing possibilities in reconciling Thomas’s view of ecological agency, his theological premise of friendship still offers insights. Regarding friendship, in its “original” sense, Thomas ponders an odd question that may determine his sense of ecological agency. He asks whether, before the fateful decision, Adam possesses all the virtues, especially pertaining to conditions of the human will. In direct communion with God, Thomas speculates, Adam did possess virtues although he had no need to exercise them in this state of original justice. But he goes further to explicate that, in this original state, this first human “was so disposed that he would *repent*, if there had been a sin to repent for; and had he seen unhappiness in his neighbor, he would have done his best to remedy it.” In that original state, Thomas says, there was no reason for sorrow, guilt, and unhappiness. Therefore, he argues, Adam nonetheless possessed inherent capacity for repentance and to enact mercy (*miser cordia*). For “neighbors,” Adam would have extended mercy, a deep sorrow that Thomas identifies with the unhappiness of another. Later, this disposition serves him as the human expression of divine charity. Although Thomas could not anticipate the Anthropocene, he was able to imagine corporal works of mercy that extend his notion of “neighbor” beyond the human.

In this vein, prudence prompts us to understand the common good anew. Between Muslims and Christians, a reconciling approach can shift the tenor, nature, and character of collective action problems that predetermine the challenge of climate justice. From a Catholic perspective, drawing on Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, Darlene Fozard Weaver notes its transformative impact: “We learn to live as ones forgiven through the

formative word we encounter in the church and through character-forming practices like sacraments.” As “shared, penitent practice, in ecclesial life, Christian responses are renewed in awareness of and acknowledged need of forgiveness,” again notes Weaver, “such that our reconciliation in God necessarily involves our inner transfiguration and the transformation of our relationships with others and the world.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Muslims may affirm the benefits of their own penitent practices, as they give witness to climate change.

To reconcile flourishing, practicing “respect for nature” may find relations rectified by way of “ecological restoration.” In the next chapter, we shall consider the case of the Niger Delta, a region that has suffered from oil extraction. In a reconciling manner, the question of ecological agency turns on what Weaver names a “penitent, shared practice.” We should “Romantic” escapades that wish to return ecosystems to an idyllic state prior to human intervention. Rather, reinhabiting degraded, damaged sites begin to resolve tensions that undermine flourishing. What could this entail, inter-communally, for Muslim-Christian comparative theology? If Christians can offer practices of repentance and the virtue of hope in the struggle for climate justice,¹⁰⁷ for the sake of friendship, a comparative theological approach opens possibilities of repentance and fostering hope in ways that extend beyond the Church. In this way, inviting Muslim participation, we might turn focus toward rectifying terrestrial habits.

¹⁰⁶ Darlene Fozard Weaver, “Reconciliation in God and Christian Life,” chapter 6 in *The Acting Person and the Christian Life* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 161–98, cited at 187, also 162.

¹⁰⁷ For this viewpoint, see Neil Messer, “Sin and Salvation,” in Northcott and Scott, *Systematic Theology and Climate Change*, 124–40, esp. 134–5.

**Between Fear and Hope:
Social Resilience, the Analogical Imagination, and Ecological Restoration**

For the sake of climate justice, this chapter addresses the basic need for hope. While seeking to make hope less subject to despair and wishful thinking, this chapter seeks to understand how it may be possible to build resilience in accord with hope. For this purpose, it revisits one of the concluding calls to social action by the authors of the “Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change,” specifically the shared task of building “resilience, especially for the most vulnerable.” In a reconciling approach, from a Catholic perspective, the challenge of building resilience integrates multiple but interrelated crises: environmental degradation, radical inequality, and intergenerational justice. After appraising the state of hope in climate ethics, I argue that the virtue accounts of hope that both Aquinas and Ghazālī provide offer resourceful lessons for fostering hope, particularly how hope imparts resilience. In this light, the chapter begins with the case of the Niger Delta—re-visiting a situation that demands the collaboration of Muslims and Christians.

This chapter, shifting focus from needs of positive self-identity and positive self-efficacy, seeks to foster a certain kind of hopefulness in response to climate change. Consequently, whereas preceding exercises addressed comportment and bearings, this chapter queries the moral outlook of climate ethics. In short, the task is to develop ways to occupy a horizon of hope. From a comparative theological standpoint, the purpose of sustaining an emerging praxis of hope it also to create more resilient dispositions, and, by the way, propose potential ways more broadly to build resilience in accord with hope.

Primary Concerns: Climate of Fear, Horizons of Hope, Building Resilience

In her 2018 book *Climate Justice*, Mary Robinson tries to motivate a particular kind of civic hope. While summarizing her foundation’s mission, as former president of the Republic of Ireland and currently United Nations special envoy, Robinson exhorts others to personalize the issue of climate change in the pursuit of the common good. To this end, inviting others, she recalls her grandson Rory’s birth as the precise instant when her own

commitment to climate justice deepened. From that instant, she vowed to always consider his life “through the prism of our planet’s precarious futures.” Thus, her hope is for her grandson and his generation to “inherit a world to live in, and not one on the brink of despair.” Her own resolution was tied to his vulnerability, the hope that he would be able to flourish. This is not an exclusive kind of hope, strictly for the personal well-being of her grandson, but a more universal and inclusive hope for the flourishing of others, and the world.

Twenty years ago, in Bygdaby (the case to which we have continually revisited), Kari Marie Norgaard observed the pervasive ways fear grips this small community when the issue of climate change is raised. In public, at times, this nameless fear is made explicit. “I think maybe that most people think so little about climate change,” one villager named Øystein confesses, “because they are afraid we are on the wrong track. That it could go badly. But we don’t know ... that this is as far as it goes for Norway.” In Bygdaby, however, not all quite so fear-stricken, nor are their responses identical. For Lise, a local mother, a deep-seated ambivalence is reflected: “Yes, of course [climate change] is one of the reasons that I try to be active—try to influence, you know. I am very pessimistic when I think about these things.” She admits, although dominated by fear, that she still holds firm to the hopeful intention that her participation matters. These and other reactions led Norgaard, among other considerations, to advocate for ways to address this lack of hope.

In the face of climate change, resonant doubts about hope are raised anew. For some, such as Laurie Zoloth’s critic, visions of ethical adaptation and appeals to specific action can sow a false hope. Reproaching a false sense of hope, rhetorically, his question challenges the ethical purpose of her proposal: “aren’t we building a false sense of

optimism that is just going to be overwhelmed in tsunami-like proportions—by despair?”¹ In a sense, this kind of skeptical stance echoes the retort by Bill Nordhaus, the prominent economist, who rebuked “subjective” appeals to hope as inadequate for achieving “realistic progress on climate change.”² For other critics, in principle, hope is not so much problem as the expectations that are imported into hope. In the context of climate change, as comparative theologian Glenn Willis has noted, several Buddhist thinkers criticized “theistic” conceptions as immature, naïve, and passive. Many Christians might not be well disposed to adapt suitably, Johanna Macy and Chris Johnstone contest, judging: “Passive hope is about waiting for external agencies to bring about what we desire.”³

Few, I have discovered, have bothered to wonder how the lack of hope affects the people of Bygdaby. As a “wicked problem,” it is fair to state that the issue of climate change tends to produce a climate of fear—it continually looms over ethical questions and destabilizes efforts to deliberate how, responsively, we should live. Whereas this takes a toll on sense of identity and personal efficacy, meanwhile, hope is often subject to either despair or wishful thinking. If we can be candid, momentarily, I must acknowledge that the predominant fear in the case of Bygdaby is both recognizable and understandable.

¹ For these two informants, see Norgaard, *Living in Denial*, 82. The ellipsis from is transcribed from the interview and into text. For her conclusion, see 222. The exchange between Laurie Zoloth and “her critic” is set as the scene of instruction in the introduction. It is revisited in chapter 4.

² William Nordhaus, *A Question of Balance: Weighing the Options on Global Warming Policies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 20, cf. Willis Jenkins, “The Turn to Virtue in Climate Ethics: Wickedness and Goodness in the Anthropocene,” *Environmental Ethics* 38 (2017): 79 n3.

³ Glenn Willis, “Abandon All Hope of Fruition: Critical Notes on Engaged Buddhism,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 37 (2017): 247–56. See, e.g., John Stanley, David R. Loy, and Gyurme Dorje, *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2009), and Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2012). Glenn Willis reports, Macy and Johnstone’s proposal assumes a “strong ethical and epistemological confidence.” For them, hope entails a three-step process—first, it requires a clear view of reality; second, hope is identified in directing aims toward which “we’d like things to move”; third, specific “steps” in that direction. In my research, a more appreciative, inclusive, and constructive Buddhist engagement of Christian hope can be found in Judith Andre, *Worldly Virtue: Moral Ideals and Contemporary Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 35–6.

Moreover, I suspect that most of us who think about climate change know this fear. I do agree that virtue responses require more than hope. I do not agree, however, that hopeful responses are in vain.

In response to climate change, hope can seem a bizarre to think about these changing and especially challenging circumstances. Nevertheless, as Mike Hulme notices, hope has become a key part of the “new language emerging around the fringes of climate change research.” He affirms, in the face of disagreement, that at the very least hope provides us the basic capacity to “contemplate anew.”⁴ In this vein, one way of reclaiming hope is to examine how habituated practices become reconfigured to cultivate ways of living that allow the possibility for others to flourish. For a similar reason, in response to climate change, Willis Jenkins offers the basic distinction between “pessimistic” and “hopeful” appeals to virtue ethics. Directed toward reinhabitation, virtue-rooted approaches can draw upon the concept of habituation to enact and think through the adaptive attempts to reconcile human and ecological flourishing. In short, responding to climate change, how does hope come into play?

For climate ethics, another way of responding could be based on a balanced sense of equilibrium that hope can afford virtue responses. In short, hope consists in a certain mean between extremes. When appraising the current state of climate change, reasons to hope can seem scant and signs of hope may be difficult to glimpse. Perhaps, Zoloth’s critics and the others might concede that it is better to think, act, and respond in hope, instead of despair and wishful thinking—each comprises differently kind of expectation. I emphasize

⁴ Mike Hulme, “Climate Change and Virtue: An Apologetic,” *Humanities* 3 (2014): 299–312, cited at 303, 306, cf. Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008).

the mediating purpose of hope to support the goal of reinhabitation and to advocate for the “political hope” that dialogue promises. But what do we ultimately hope for?

For climate ethics, a major reason to understand the necessity of hope can come more clearly into view when we turn toward the challenge of building resilience. In 2015, for instance, Muslim scholars authored a specific call of social action, issuing as a universal goal in building “resilience of all, and especially the most vulnerable” (3.3).⁵ For what it is worth, religious perspectives have recognized potential problems with hope. For example, in summation, religious ethicists Whitney Bauman and Kevin O’Brien are prompted to ask: “But what exactly can we hope for without embracing a false, naïve optimism and ignoring the reality and wickedness of environmental and social problems?”⁶ By fostering hope, understood as an inherently dynamic and cooperative virtue, climate ethics can reframe concrete and material challenges of climate change into an inclusive, participatory deliberation toward a common purpose, namely building resilience with special concern for the most vulnerable.

To develop a reconciling approach, we shall turn to the case of the Niger Delta, which will allow us to pursue two key questions: How is it possible to become less subject to despair, wishful thinking, and a pervasive and destabilizing sense of fear? In response to climate change, how is it possible to build resilience in accord with hope? The key, however, is to understand how these questions are interrelated tasks.

⁵ In this respect, this chapter seeks to develop this virtue-oriented goal as a common good, proposing a potential point of correspondence that is identified through the comparative reading exercise in chapter 2.

⁶ Whitney A. Bauman and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Conclusion: Despair, Hope, and Action,” in *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, 2nd ed. (2011; London: Routledge, 2017), cited at 266 (266–74). It must be noted that Bauman does not identify as Christian. See Whitney A. Bauman, “Christianity: An Outsider’s Perspective,” in *World Religions in Dialogue: A Comparative Theological Approach*, edited by Pim Valkenberg (Winona, MN: Anselm, 2017).

5.0.1. *The Niger Delta: A Case for Muslim-Christian Climate Ethics*⁷

The Niger Delta in West Africa has the largest mangrove forests in the world, and concurrently sustains the most extensive wetlands on the entire continent. In the delta's drainage basin, the diversity of fauna includes and supports more species of freshwater fish than any other habitat in the greater West Africa region. The Benue River meets the Niger River in the delta, before its waters are emptied into the Gulf of Guinea, and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. Some claim Nigeria's mangrove forests are the largest "carbon sink" in the world. It is not only its biodiversity that makes the Niger Delta a case that calls for our attention. Importantly, the broader region that depends on the Niger Delta is also home to approximately 35 million Muslims and Christians. Both communities constitute roughly half of all Nigerians, with a smaller portion being those who adhere primarily to indigenous spiritual traditions.⁸ Reflecting the national population, in the delta roughly half are Christian and the other half Muslim.⁹ In the Niger Delta, generally, the state of Muslim-Christian relations can be regarded as "harmonious." Although between 1967 and 1970

⁷ This section presents a detailed outline for further research and a basic template of a case-study lesson plan with undergraduate students. For further research, more exact details for developing such a case study are being developed. In building resilience, there is plenty that we do not yet know. Suffice to say, in recent years, adequate knowledge is available on how to plan, design, and manage reduction in environmental disruption. These are primarily designed under the rubric of "mitigation." This "restorative" approach is different. As this case suggests, the real problem seems to be not a lack of knowledge but a lack of dialogue, coordination, and cooperation. In the case of the Niger Delta, efforts to reduce political corruption and protect mangrove forests implicate the need for Muslim-Christian dialogue. Therefore, modestly, this concluding section means to connect this inquiry into hope and resilience with a particular context where the collective task of building resilience is needed. In doing so, the case aims to provide an illustration of the potential usefulness of comparative theology.

⁸ For a more "investigatory" approach, see Eliza Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010), esp. 17–73.

⁹ Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, "The Global Religious Landscape" (18 December 2012), available online at: <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-muslim> (accessed April 12, 2021). As of 2012, it is estimated that Nigeria is home to 78,050,000 Christians (49.3% of the population) and 77,300,000 Muslims (48.8%). The internal diversity is also significant, since many Christians belong to Pentecostal communities, and there is also a sizable number of Shia Muslims. "Niger Delta," typically, refers to the nine oil-producing states in the southeastern area of Nigeria.

sectarian violence did occur during the Nigeria Civil War, by and large, the Niger Delta was not a site of these conflicts.

In the nineteenth century, the British colonized Nigeria, a territory that became officially designated in 1901 as a British protectorate. In the Niger Delta the British founded coastal cities, such as Port Harcourt, to establish specific industries and to facilitate trade and resource extraction. As colonial governance was weakened during World War II, Nigerian independence movements succeeded as of 1960 in gaining national sovereignty. Three years later, however, its republican government was toppled by military rule. After a century of colonial domination, governance returned to Nigerian control. Currently, political corruption has become one of the most pressing issues that is implicated in the wide-scale deforestation and destruction of existing bio-diverse habitats. In the Nigerian delta, this issue is interlocked with the extraction of oil.

Nearly all the country's oil production originates in the Niger Delta. Nigeria, for perspective, is the source of roughly a tenth of the fossil fuel that the United States consumes, thus making Nigeria the fifth largest oil supplier for American consumers. Although some of that supply comes from offshore drilling in the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean, the overwhelming majority is extracted from oil and gas reserves underneath the delta. This is a more recent development. In 1956, after striking oil, Shell started exporting commercial quantities of crude oil through Port Harcourt.

Despite local protests, since the 1950s an increasingly industrialized process of oil extraction has disrupted and spoiled the biodiversity of this water basin. Typically, oil companies claim "right-of-way" to install oil pipelines, thereby destroying mangrove forests. Additionally, oil-spill events pose imminent threats that further exacerbate gradual

deforestation of the mangroves in the Niger Delta. Exploration for oil, as well as natural gas reserves, releases harmful gases that contribute to environmental degradation and additionally present direct human health impacts. One adverse health hazard is respiratory problems and cancer due to Shell permitting natural gases to flare. In 2009, Shell settled a \$15 million lawsuit with citizens from the Delta state of Ogoni.¹⁰ The corporation was accused of encouraging and funding a government crackdown against protests that culminated in the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists.

Local populations, faced with these challenges, have assembled numerous organized protests to address repercussions of oil extraction and destruction of mangrove forests. On a weekly average, oil spillage contaminates the delta's waterways, and compounds impacts of "gas flares" and disposal of industrial waste through pipeline blowouts that are already polluting the mangrove forests.¹¹ Due to equipment failure, some oil spillage is related to aging infrastructure, while other spills are as old as four decades. Catholic ethicist Chidi Nwachunkwu-Udaka warns, for instance, that in the next three decades there would also be a loss of 40% of the inhabitable terrain in the delta due to dam construction. He notes, "crude oil exploration and extraction have left the populace impoverished through the pollution of bodies of water, land, and air in conjunction with an unhealthy tribal divide in the country."¹² Also, destroying mangrove forests leaves the delta and its inhabitants further exposed to coastal erosion, sea level rise and flooding.

¹⁰ See EarthRights International, "Wiwa v. Shell," *EarthRights International*, available online at: <https://earthrights.org/case-study-wiwa-v-shell/> (accessed 12 April 2021).

¹¹ The term "gas flaring" refers to the practice of burning off flammable gases that are not wanted directly by way of combustion. It is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions in Nigeria.

¹² Benedict Chidi Nwachunkwu-Udaku, "The Problem of Economic Sustainability in Nigeria: A Call for a New Paradigm," in *Just Sustainability: Technology, Ecology, and Resource Extraction*, ed. Christiana Z. Peppard and Andrea Vicini, 39–43 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015).

In January 2021, a Dutch court decided agreed with four Nigerian farmers that a Shell subsidiary was responsible for multiple large-scale oil-spills in the Niger Delta. As local initiatives direct protests against multi-national energy corporations, political corruption is also implicated in this state of affairs. According to Nwachunkwu-Udaka, oil extraction replicates a familiar “paradigm of domination” that persists as a colonial legacy. Typically, police agencies safeguard interests of oil companies, while stoking tribal divisions between the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. In short, by inheriting this pattern, a colonial habit continues to be enacted within political systems wherein a “dominating” party develops, maintains, and expands dynastic power through “conquest” at the expense of other tribes. This state of colonial relations has denied opportunities for all Nigerians to develop, as a result, cementing a normal state of relations between “master” (*nnukwu mmanwu*) and “slave” (*obere mmanwu*). Now, as Nwachunkwu-Udaka observes, paternalistic habits continue to materialize in economic policies and political corruption.

According to Edward Osang Obi, a Catholic theological ethicist, extraction and mining practices are replicating this colonial pattern with inter-generational effects.¹³ Though “resource rich,” the Nigerian economy has come to depend primarily on oil and other extractive industries and continues to allocate vast majority of profit and resources to the hands of foreign corporations and shareholders. This situation is the “resource curse,” Obi assesses, but points out failure in policy: due to the logic of extraction, poverty still predominates in the Niger Delta. Often, a Christian adjacent notion of the “prosperity

¹³ Edward Osang Obi, “Mining and Resource Extraction in Nigeria: Social Justice and Corporate Responsibility,” *Concilium* no. 5 (2018): 113–17; see also idem, “The Exploitation of Natural Resources: Reconfiguring Economic Relations toward a Community-of-Interests Perspective,” in Peppard and Vicini, *Just Sustainability*, 223–33; see also Michael Watts, “Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria,” *Geopolitics* 9, no. 1 (2004): 50–80. Given widespread poverty, radical inequality, and social instability, without fuller sovereignty, Nigeria is an example of an oil-producing state that some have labeled a “rentier” state.

gospel” underwrites a political agenda that allows exploitation of labor. But Nigerian politicians perpetuate, as Osang Obi notes, colonial policies of “divide and rule” to protect foreign corporate interests.

For some Nigerians, in response, improving tribal relations can pave the way to more adequately address the ecological crises that are unfolding in the Niger Delta. The pattern of domination that Nwachunkwu-Udaka notices tends to divide Nigerians on the basis of ethnicity as well as religion. Based on his own Igbo heritage, he urges that we see how the virtue concept of “resilience” (*dimkpa*) might allow Nigerians to become more engaged with each other across religious differences and other social boundaries. For the Igbo, one of the four major tribal groups in Nigeria, this virtue characteristic informs a calling to prevail regardless how unbearable situations may seem. Literally meaning “the husband of necessity,” he explains that this social virtue *dimkpa* affirms commitments that the Niger Delta is not a problem “beyond repair.” In common, whether Muslim or Christian, he suggests the Igbo possess a particular way of knowing that mindfully supports the need to “reduce forms of manipulation and social disabilities that paralyze progress and cause environmental degradation.” By enacting faith-based commitments, he suggests that Muslim and Christians together could combat these polluting and extractive processes and attempt to halt the destruction of mangrove forests.

5.0.2. *Brief Observations on Building Resilience: Between Fear and Hope*

According to Mary Robinson, in *Climate Justice*, the stories of “climate change witnesses” demonstrate various meanings of hope and resilience. From her standpoint, as Pope Francis similarly urged, Robinson is convinced that political prudence calls for “us to marry the standards of human rights with issues of sustainable development and

responsibility for climate change.”¹⁴ Therefore, “in tandem,” specifying the essential needs and protecting basic freedoms of the most vulnerable must be prioritized along with reducing anthropogenic causes of climate change. However, in exemplary figures, many of whom come from the “margins” of climate ethics, we can recognize and honor those who are giving witness to what is happening on the ground, as they “come from communities that are the least responsible for the pollution yet are the most affected.” In the case of the Niger Delta, similarly, the best possible response is toward “expanding the dialogue beyond emissions and mitigation to incorporate the language of justice and humanity.”¹⁵ As advocated by climate change witnesses—notably, most of whom in her account are women—Robinson finds a special purpose in the struggle for climate justice. For her part, Robinson states that climate change witnesses enact hope and resilience to “help us in the times to come.”

For those of us in whom fear predominates, such examples demonstrate resilience and enact hope thereby help us to orient deliberations toward the common good. Also, their perspectives on climate change reveal the interconnections between the human as well as the ecological problems. As such they challenge us to take a stance on questions that affect how we live. This specific sense of resilience, consequently, is not the same as the resilience that Agnes Brazal identified in how some survivors responded to the 2013 typhoon, especially widowed mothers. For Brazal, a habit of resilience was developed because of negotiating “vicissitudes,” the ability to “maintain competencies” of all kinds

¹⁴ Mary Robinson, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 1–2, and 9. For more on this mission, see Mary Robinson Foundation–Climate Justice, <https://www.mrfcj.org/> (accessed 11 December 2019)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

“despite stress,” and disposes those who possess resilience to “adapt creatively.”¹⁶ Effectively, in identifiable ways, Robinson suggests that resilience—a disposition often imagined as a coping strategy—can become redefined. If understood as a potential habit, resilience can be developed poorly or well, and determines to some extent whether transitions and ethical adaptation is done well—that is, justly, equitably, fairly—or not. Due to the commitments, cooperative initiative, and resolve of those whom she regards as climate change witnesses, implicitly, Robinson claims resilience is not uniform. Still, in common, hope may impart resilient aspects of the actions and habits of climate change witnesses, those toward whom climate ethics should turn.

In this spirit, the examples of climate change witnesses should make clearer what a proper hope contributes to the collective task of building resilience. From a Filipina context, Brazal claims that a virtue response “requires resilience’s attitude of hope.”¹⁷ If true, practically speaking, how so? In the *Summa*, Thomas articulates the theological virtue of hope as the disposition that enables a “wayfarer” to pursue a “future good, difficult but possible to obtain.”¹⁸ For him, while the status of hope as a virtue is questionable, and dubious are reasonable, Thomas insists hope is what enables Christians to seek and ultimately attain the ultimate purpose of life, that is, loving union with God. For Thomas, hope is primarily due to grace, not human effort. Hope is made possible through the “assistance of another,” namely God. For this reason, he determines that hope is a theological virtue, not a moral virtue. For climate ethics, still, one can identify a particularly

¹⁶ Brazal, “Resilience,” 58, cf. Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006). See chapter 2, nn9, 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁸ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a1 co.

Thomistic note in Brian Treanor's assertion about hope: "The hopeful person does not patiently await salvation from some external source, but becomes actively involved in her salvation and, in the case of the Anthropocene, the salvation of the world."¹⁹ For Catholic perspectives, in a deeply familiar sense, the practical challenges that prompt a "civic" hope may come into greater focus in response to climate change. In hope, as we shall discuss, Thomas admits that such participation and actions instantiate what he names "living acts of hope" (*motus spei formatae*). Thomas does not think through the links between hope and the virtue that addresses fear (for him, fortitude). Nonetheless, we can discern how such a disposition imparts and promotes resiliency

In the face of arduous circumstances that life presents, we can benefit from turning to Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, and his distinct approach toward fostering hope. Comparably, from a Ghazālīan perspective, hope is understood as a "pilgrim" disposition that distinguishes those who yearn for the love of God. In an analogous manner, the reasons to act are motivated out of love. But dissimilar is the starting-point, primary focus, and his way to foster hope. In a sense, as Ghazālī emphasizes, hope needs practice and cultivation. In this respect, he claims, becoming rightfully hopeful is like farming. No one can produce abundance without consolidating the right means. Also, like a harvest, the exact outcome is yet to be determined. For climate ethics, while these insights can be instructive, Ghazālī also contributes a different way to appreciate the inextricable relation between fear and hope. Fear tends to be ignored in talk of hope. But Ghazālī does not permit this erasure. As a matter of fact, he may shed light on how hope transforms fear, reviving us from despair, and how a virtuous sense of fear is what prevents us from

¹⁹ Brian Treanor, "Hope in the Age of the Anthropocene," in *Ecology, Ethics, and Hope*, ed. Andrew T. Brei (London: Rowan and Littlefield International, 2016), 104 (95–110).

embracing wishful thinking. Fruitfully, in this respect, he may elucidate neglected aspects of Thomas's understanding of hope. For climate ethics, thinking with Ghazālī as well as Aquinas, a dialogical line of approach can exercise resilience to foster "civic" hope.

5.1 *Status of Hope in Climate Ethics: Which Hope? Whose Resilience?*

For climate ethics, the challenging journey is arduous, long, and so requires cooperation. As a typically "wicked problem," climate change is not an issue that will be resolved in a single lifetime, nor alone; thus, in a sense, we should be allowed to falter and come to depend on the assistance of another. In this section, we seek to promote solidarity and to reflect upon hope as essential for virtue responses. In response to climate change, each proponent of hope offers distinct insights and exemplifies a kind of hope. Perspectives, thus, can shed light on how it is possible to "rehabilitate," repair and even recover hope. In *Reason in a Dark Time*, Dale Jamieson suggests hope—not unlike temperance—may selectively require some form of "rehabilitation."²⁰ In this regard, he is not claiming wholesale change of hope is necessary. Rather, his suggestion delineates a need to reinterpret aspects of a virtue that would render it not wholly identical to its classic understandings. How, in response to climate change, ought we to hope? For Christians and Muslims, given the virtue accounts of Aquinas and Ghazālī, this interpretive task may involve recover, renewing, and reviving some theological aspects of hope in pursuing climate justice, and more specifically building resilience. Thus, intending to understand how to build resilience in accord with hope, we shall evaluate the state of climate ethics.

5.1.1. *The Integrity Model of Hope*

²⁰ See Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 8, cited at 187 n23.

In climate ethics, a common way to “rehabilitate” hope is to disambiguate hope from other “counterfeits” and facsimiles. As such, basically, the idea of hope emerges and becomes further clarified against dangerous extremes such as “naïve optimism.” On the other hand, hope is waged also against despair. In this respect, as a moral outlook, hope specifically contributes a certain relation with the future. For some climate ethicists, contradistinctions such as these lead them to defend hope in the interest of preserving ethical integrity in the face of climate change. Still, others perceive in hope its own integrative purpose. Accordingly, hope is presented as the virtue that seeks to make the future good somehow concretely present.

Consider: gardening. In climate ethics, philosopher Marcelo Di Paola considers hope as an active, expansive disposition, suggesting: “Typically, hope is directed precisely at everything that lies beyond one’s doing, while optimism importantly depends on confidence in one’s doing—in one’s effort, dedication, abilities, training, and work.”²¹ Like gardening, when both done well and with “creative receptivity,” an action honors co-dependency. In effect, hope also draws us out of ourselves. It begins to take root as more proactive and yet receptive dispositions are being cultivated. Notice that this sense is precisely what climate change seems to threaten; incapacitated with fear and subject to despair, it is difficult to remain open, proactive, committed, and receptive to the future. Later, we shall recall al-Ghazālī’s use of this same metaphor to foster the proper sense of hope. Thus, as Di Paola proposes, typically hopeful actions are “planted” in anticipation of what is not yet determined.

²¹ Marcello Di Paola, *Ethics and the Politics of Built Environment: Gardens of the Anthropocene* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 76–7, cited at 77; and idem, “Virtues for the Anthropocene,” *Environmental Values* 24, no. 2 (2015): 183–207.

Similarly, in *The Anthropocene Project*, Byron Williston's climate ethic relies on hope's "*temporal* outwardness." In common, he defines hope according to its temporal relation. For climate ethics, Williston's account is one of the first book-length reflections in a key of virtue; it also gives the fullest argument of the virtues of hope in response to climate change. As Williston characterizes hope chiefly by its relation to a future good, he states definitively that the virtue is "directed at the future but in a way that is constitutively lucid and active."²² In this way, he asserts, hope stands in sharp contrast with "wishful thinking" precisely because hope enables informed and concerned citizens to engage more fully in response to climate change. Whereas wishful thinking permits disengagement, such clear-eyed and realistic hope according to Williston makes us alert to the concrete challenges of climate change.

If hope is lucid and active, what is its goal? For what should we hope in response to climate change? For Di Paola, not unlike gardening, hope is teleological. In responding to climate change, he modestly proposes, hope involves particular practices and moral formation to be nurtured in the grounded pursuit of sound balance. This comportment, newfound, may also continue to deepen and grow. Not only shaping habits, Di Paola's ecological praxis also promises to integrate his own sense of personal good with the responsibility of carefully tending to his garden. For Williston, on the other hand, hope ought to be pinned tangibly to a political objective, that is, to "decarbonize our economy quickly enough" so that it is possible to "preserve a meaningful normative continuity between our generation and subsequent generations."²³ Yoked to the politics of decarbonization, Williston's hope rests on a singular condition: namely, if "future people

²² Williston, *Anthropocene Project*, cited at 10, see also 156–7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 134, 155.

are given the best possible chance to flourish and maintain or enhance the institutions of justice.”²⁴ The implication is clear enough: unchecked greenhouse gas emissions and the escalation of a carbon economy make that vision of flourishing a remote possibility.

To sustain the assertion that this goal is not simply worthwhile but possible we would need to grasp the political means by which it is obtainable. Given the political nature of his “secular” hope, Williston’s standpoint might be expected to offer an account for how hope can justifiably make such a moral claim. In response to climate change, after all, prudence requires us to inquire more practically into how this is possible to “measure” hope. For example, Mary Robinson argues for the need to seek basic standards of quality of life—as honored in human rights—in tandem with responsible measures that not only moderate and limit, rather to drastically reduce anthropogenic causes of climate change. Her hope is signified in the wish that her grandson inherits a world that is a livable world, and not one subject to despair. In *Climate Justice*, she explains that the 2015 Paris Agreement offers basic principles and a political agenda for preventing temperatures from crossing a critical threshold: a rise to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial averages. Practically speaking, she clarifies, the goal of achieving net-zero carbon omissions before the year 2050 is attainable.²⁵ Notably, in contrast, the account of hope that Williston provides fails to invest this level of detail in objective measures that would justifiably ground hope.

In the face of climate change, tellingly, Williston names this disposition a “hope against hope.” He presses his readers to consider hope against “apocalyptic” futures and dire horizons, defending why his account of “hope against hope” is right. In effect, the darkness of fear and even despair is permitted to enter into his account of hope to urge the

²⁴ Ibid., 155.

²⁵ Robinson, *Climate Justice*, 87.

sense of hope he has in mind. For his readers, deliberately, he sketches outlines of two possible future scenarios, on the one hand, a moral doomsday that is catastrophically “dreadful” and, on the other, a future world that is characterized with severe austerity, triage, and a “survival lottery” that, as he narrates, is “merely bad.”²⁶ In this sense, he suggests hope must discover ways to resist quietist proclivities and temptations of wishful thinking. Optimism, Williston forewarned, “is, alas, surely unjustified?”²⁷

In this light, key differences between Williston’s “hope against hope” and Di Paola’s organic way of rehabilitating hope may come into focus. In his groundbreaking survey of the field’s “virtue turn,” Willis Jenkins distinguishes generally “pessimistic” and “hopeful” appeals to virtue ethics. In a basic sense, the former seeks to maintain ethical integrity in the face of cultural collapses, whereas more hope-filled reasoning behind the latter is generative. Fruitfully, Jenkins explicates, a “hopeful” turn is effective insofar as it “anticipates the reconfigured practices of living well [that] can open new possibilities of moral agency.”²⁸ The decisive differences, from a virtue perspective, raise questions about motivating reasons. In a sense, as Di Paola’s hope suggests, virtue ethics offer a promising way to reconcile ecological flourishing with the integrity of just actions. His view permits that such integrity is modestly possible within personal—and it must be added communal—habits. A more grounded hope, Di Paola muses, ought to resemble the myriad mundane ways a gardener plants seeds, tends to the soil, weeds. Thus, gradually she “incarnates a trusting attitude toward nature and her own practice.”²⁹ Is the aim, on the other hand, equal to the task? Is it sufficient to the challenge of climate justice?

²⁶ Ibid., ch. 5, “Hope,” 133–57, esp. 140–7.

²⁷ Ibid., 135.

²⁸ Jenkins, “Turn,” 77–8.

²⁹ Ibid., 76.

By stark contrast, the grounds of Williston's hope are questionable for at least a couple reasons. To be clear, it is difficult to fault the justice of Williston's motivation: "Ultimately I will suggest that to do so is to admit that the present is wronging the future."³⁰ Williston's hope is not wrong, but it does err on the side of despair. "Hope against hope," Williston frankly states, "is an *exceedingly* difficult psychological state to sustain." Considering all odds, he remarks that a virtuous sense of hope is "evidence-sensitive." Remarkably, he also acknowledges that "it is pretty easy to see how the hope I have identified for our crisis" may be "disappointed."³¹ Thus, it raises an urgent question: How is Williston's "hope against hope" sustainable? For him, the only possible stance is *parrhesia*, public interventions with bold truth-telling speech for the sake of justice. It is a public practice that may promote autonomy and seek to preserve ethical integrity. But as a holistic strategy, does it not risk manipulating hope in the service of what Jenkins calls "the consolations of living well"? If so, Williston's hope against hope typifies more "pessimistic" appeals and we have reasonable grounds to ask: How does this hope not become subject and confined to burnout, cynicism, and desolation? Still, as a salutary reminder, Williston's hope against hope does unsettle any self-assured inclination to offer platitudes to the cries of injustice and real suffering of the voiceless.

5.1.2. *A Radical Hope*

In a radical sense, climate ethics needs exemplary models of hope. In *Radical Hope*, the esteemed Yale University philosopher Jonathan Lear retells and meditates on the story

³⁰ Ibid., 159.

³¹ Ibid., 137, 139, 148. Emphasis in the original text.

of Chief Plenty Coups (Alaxchiiaahush), and the end of a Crow Indian way of life.³² Born in 1848, at the “cliffs that have no name” in what is now Montana, Plenty Coups belonged to the Crow. As a young boy, circa 1855, he experienced mystical visions while he was undertaking a customary rite-of-passage for Crow youth. For tribal elders, these dream-visions of the youth provided an invaluable source to interpret beyond what ordinarily was available to consciousness. In the case of Plenty Coups, his dreams about a day when the buffalo herds would disappear prompted the decisive steps to set a new course in Crow history. As a sixteen-year-old warrior, Plenty Coups also became revered for the courage he demonstrated when he scalped a Lakota Sioux warrior who had killed his brother. He also acquired his name because of multiple demonstrations of courage. For the Crow, traditionally, the hallmark of courage had been expressed in “scoring” and “planting coups.” By virtue of courage, a Crow warrior could plant a “coup” wherever he had stolen a horse from the neighboring Blackfeet or Cheyenne tribes. In this respect, his name underscores the prestige and acclaim that he had earned by a young age. However, as Plenty Coups’s dream-vision foreshadowed, the Crow could no longer protect the lands where they used to hunt buffalo and beaver, nor demonstrate courage in this manner. American settlers and cavalries expelled the Lakota Sioux tribe from their traditional territories. As a respected tribal leader, in 1880, Plenty Coups joined a delegation to Washington, D.C., in order to negotiate terms of peace, land, and territory. For the Crow, as a leader, he is commonly regarded as their last chief.

³² Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). This philosophical inquiry has proven “irresistible” for climate ethicists who have attempted to characterize the kind of hope needed in response to the climate crisis, including Thompson, Sarah Amsler, Dale Jamieson, Willis Jenkins, Sarah Karloff, Kenneth Shockley, and Byron Williston. This ethical work has also garnered attention of such Christian theologians of hope such as Werner Jeanrond, “Hopes, Hope and Radical Hope: Christian Hope and the Praxis of Love,” presented as the Annual Candlemas Lecture, Boston College, 6 February 2019.

What kind of hope does an example such as Chief Plenty Coups offer climate ethics? Responses vary widely, and claims differ profoundly. For Williston's "hope against hope," citing the near unanimous consensus of climate science, an example like Plenty Coups ought to be interpreted for the *authority* of his visionary dream. In one dream, he envisioned a radically different future: a non-human presence, namely Buffalo-Bull, directs him to see that the buffalo, once countless, no longer are emerging from the ground; instead, the "Spotted-buffalo," some "strange animals from another world" replaced them. Considering Plenty Coups's dreams about the buffalo, decisively, the tribe vacated traditional hunting grounds and withdrew to a reservation in the Big Horn and Little Big Horn valleys. Likewise, given the climate crisis and an impending cultural collapse, Williston asserts the public must heed "calls to wake up to reality." Thus, framing the historic lesson, he concludes: "Similarly, we will overcome our political inertia only if we begin to treat the near-unanimous findings of climatologists with the degree of authority they deserve."³³

For climate ethicist Allen Thompson, in stark contrast, the more important ethical claims concern what hope signifies. For him, as reflected in the example of Plenty Coups, hope involves an "imaginative excellence," one that is resolute "even in the face of a well-justified despair." Similarly, based in the example of Plenty Coups, he proposes that climate ethics may find an exemplary kind of responsibility, "novel form of courage," and an identifiable moral outlook that seeks future goods not fully comprehensible. For the Crow culture, in the face of danger, a Crow warrior was empowered to plant a "coup" wherever he had stolen a horse from the neighboring Blackfeet and Cheyenne tribes. But

³³ Williston, *Anthropocene Project*, 155–6.

once the traditional way of life passed, Plenty Coups still drew on a habituated sense of courage to lead his community. For Thompson, in this manner, Chief Plenty Coups models dispositions, virtue, and commitments essential “for coming back to life in a form that is not yet intelligible.”³⁴

In a radical sense, the political worlds and cultural contexts of the 19th-century dislocation of indigenous communities is exceedingly different from our own. If the example and memory of Chief Plenty Coups is to be honored, offering a source of radical hope—as the case with how Allen Thompson presents him—ongoing realities and legacies of historical injustices must be acknowledged. Thompson’s use of Plenty Coups, as Willis Jenkins notices, provides an instance when the analogical imagination “can obscure dynamics of injustice.” In this context, for instance, it must be remembered “the settler culture that overran indigenous peoples of North America gave rise to the industrial culture driving climate change.” Appropriating the memory of Plenty Coups, in effect, would thus be a continuation of the hegemonic seizure of Crow territories, and even systemic erasure of their identity. It is a memory, as implied, that the Crow carry as a source of hope amidst also a history of suffering and struggle. Without acknowledging crucial differences, likeness seamlessly glosses over actual conflicts that define deeper challenges and tensions in response to climate change. Furthermore, as Jenkins criticizes, forgotten are not only conflicting narratives about climate change, but also significantly the particularities that comprise its context of diversity and moral pluralism. In order to understand virtue, he writes, ethical perspectives “depend on a vision of the good.”³⁵ In response to climate

³⁴ Allen Thompson, “Radical Hope for Living Well in a Warmer Climate,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 1-2 (2010): 43–59, cited at 49. Cp. Lear, *Radical Hope*, 103.

³⁵ See Jenkins, “Turn,” 93–4. In this discussion, he refers to Thompson, “Radical Hope for Living Well,” 55 and cites Talbot Brewer, *Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49.

change, similarly, his point can be taken as instructive for specifying the purpose of exemplary figures who exhibit habits of being that indicate radical hope.

According to Jonathan Lear, in a radical sense, Plenty Coups demonstrates hope not in wishing the buffalo herds will return nor that traditional practices would be reinstituted. This figure displays a transcendent commitment that is “marking the end of a way of life.”³⁶ But this is not the crucial point that can be drawn from this exemplar. As for Lear, he frames the radical manner of hope this way: Plenty Coups, despite suffering and grief, “could take up the Crow past,” and “project it in vibrant new ways for the Crow to live and to be.” Though the warrior honor that defined a way of life is not possible and no longer meaningful, Lear concludes, Chief “Plenty Coups offered the Crow a *traditional* way of going forward.”³⁷ Although they suffered the destruction of a *telos*, as Lear puts it, Plenty Coups was able to recognize this and advocate for the Crow new ways of life that might allow them to thrive after this devastation. In a different key, alternatively, the *telos* of the virtue may have altered, and the practical means changed, but the disposition could endure. In climate change witnesses, similarly, one may find semblances of this radical hope. For Lear, he witnesses the fruits of this radical hope when the Crow reintroduced their ritual Sun-Dance: “It is one thing to dance as though nothing has happened; it is another to acknowledge that something singularly awful has happened—the collapse of happenings—and then decide to dance.”³⁸ In a sense, some warrior ideals prevailed.

We might appreciate the intensity and degree of radical hope if we turn to Plenty Coups’s own words. In one of his iconic dreams, for instance, Plenty Coups received a

³⁶ Lear, *Radical Hope*, 37.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 51, 154.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

guiding voice that drew his attention to a tree, “the lodge of the Chickadee.” Although lacking strength, according to the vision, the Chickadee-person is a willing worker, seeks wisdom, and “is a good listener.” Constantly listening to the success and failure of others, the chickadee “yet never misses a chance to learn from others.” When the winds brought change to the lives of all the other birds, it was the chickadee who was able to remain. For Plenty Coups, this vision-dream held the most enduring power. As for Frank Lindeman, this vision probably instantiates one reason why at the outset he makes explicit his assumption that he is not able to fully plumb the depths of the Crow identity: “I am convinced that no white man has ever known the Indian.”³⁹ Although Lindeman could not grasp *thick* concepts of Crow identity, his friend does reveal for him a proper way to respond to what is fearful, traumatic, and devastating. “All my life,” he told Frank Lindeman, “I have tried to learn as the Chickadee learns, by listening—profiting by the mistakes of others, that I might help my people.”⁴⁰

For climate ethics, likewise, acts of deep listening and remembering may become integral for an emergent praxis of hope. In the theological biography of Chief Plenty Coups, much remains to be studied, understood, and said. In 1929, at the Jesuit mission of St. Xavier, Plenty Coups was baptized as a Catholic along the Bighorn River, taking the name of Henry.⁴¹ Decades earlier, in 1890, he along with several other leaders requested from

³⁹ Lindeman, *American*, ix.

⁴⁰ Lindeman, *American*, 307.

⁴¹ For this background, see Frederick Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 207. See also Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 1983). From a comparative theological perspective, this figure signifies more than the discourse of climate ethics has discussed. From a comparative theological viewpoint, a conceptual framework may be provided to reflect upon this figure’s exemplarity, with special concern for the indigenous Crow elements of his spiritual identity. This element can shed different light on how to understand his Catholicity. For climate ethics, Chief Plenty Coups can provide more insights to a moral grammar of resilience and hope. For an insightful inclusion of Black Elk as

the St. Xavier Mission a church and a school closer to the Crow who resided in the northwest district of the reservation. More inclusively, as Lear claims, we can possibly recognize the roots of Plenty Coups's hope particularly due to the reality that "it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is."⁴² For us, generally living "at a time of a heightened sense that civilizations are themselves vulnerable," the figure of Plenty Coups gives "steadfast" witness as "an exemplary human being living through an extraordinary time."⁴³ In this sense, according to Lear, his exemplarity transcends cultural and moral differences: "To be human is necessarily to be a vulnerable risk-taker; to be a courageous human is to be good at it."⁴⁴ For finite creatures such as us, faithfully, Plenty Coups's hope might offer wisdom especially when some ways of life were disintegrating, "but there was spiritual backing for the thought that new good forms of living would arise for the Crow, if only they would adhere to the virtues of the Chickadee."⁴⁵

5.1.3. *A Reclaimed Hope*

For some, hope engenders this more "open-ended" disposition but simply is called upon in moments of desolation. For others, like philosophers Clive Hamilton, hope needs to be stressed since one must pass through despair for hope to be purged. It is a path of radical negation. If the climate crisis signals the "horrors" that exceed any past challenges and trials, then, Hamilton advises that it is best to keep fixed attention on the "horrors."

an "iconic" figure of hope, similarly, see Kevin F. Burke, "Toward a Grammar of the Possible: Theological Imagination in Times of Crisis," *CTSA Proceedings* 74 (2019): 1–20, available online at: <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/article/view/11477> (accessed 6 January 2020).

⁴² Lear, *Radical Hope*, 103.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7, 105.

⁴⁴ For his thick/thin distinction, see *ibid.*, 108–9, cited at 123.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 146–47.

Would not any talk of hope be empty, if it did not confront these concrete challenges? This would not be an end, however. Penetrating passages through the depths of despair, Hamilton supposes, would have cleansing effects that remove the irrationality of blithely hopeful solutions.⁴⁶ In a sense, like Hamilton, Brian Treanor thinks the idea of hopefulness needs to be shorn of its naïveté. Events such as those that distinguish the life of Chief Plenty Coups, and that we find in the case of the Niger Delta, can shatter human hopes. In a specific sense, Treanor agrees. Standing within the Pauline tradition, which Thomas also assumes, Treanor concurs that, along with faith and charity, hope is one of the virtues “that order life to the greater good.”⁴⁷ In a different vein, contrasting with Hamilton’s path of negation, Treanor comes around to claim and affirm hope’s essential role in primarily affirming the goodness of reality, especially in opposition to despair.⁴⁸

Hope, in response to climate change, prompts us to make certain claims. Brian Treanor takes a step further, arguing hope is more properly understood as a habitual affirmation of the goodness of being. Treanor understanding hope, not as a “problem,” but as “mystery.” For Treanor, understanding hope as mysterious is key. What does he mean? In the context of climate change, hope is often reduced to a kind of calculus and appraised

⁴⁶ Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change* (London: Earthscan, 2010). For a perspective that develops Freirean themes, cf. Karen Nairn, “Learning from Young People Engaged in Climate Activism: The Potential of Collectivizing Despair and Hope,” *Young* 27, no. 5 (2019): 435–50, citing Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

⁴⁷ Brian Treanor generalizes this point, citing appreciably the philosopher Roger Scruton, who asserts: “I have no doubt that St. Paul was right to recommend faith, hope, and love (*agape*) as the virtues that order life to the greater good.” See Treanor, “Hope in the Age of the Anthropocene,” 98; cf. Roger Scruton, *The Uses of Pessimism: And the Dangers of False Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1 (1 Cor. 13:13). See also 1 Thess. 1:3, 5:8.

⁴⁸ Cp. *Emplotting Virtue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 4: “The stories we tell bear witness to our ongoing struggle between health and illness, hope and despair, refinement and barbarism, wildness and domestication, naturalness and counterfeits, genuineness and insincerity—they testify to our nature, to our way of being in the world, and to our limitations and possibilities” (4). See Treanor, “Environmentalism and Public Virtue,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 1–2 (2010): 9–28, esp. 25–7. In Treanor’s earlier work, hope plays only a very minor role as a mere framing device for narratives.

according to probabilistic outcomes. Treanor repudiates, on the other hand, how hope is typically conflated with “utopian” idealism. As such, he tenders hope as “far from delusion or evasion, the virtuous, rational and pragmatic response to a reality that seems to counsel, even demand, despair.”⁴⁹ As a habit of being, thus, it is no small difference whether we foster hope or not. For Treanor, hope disposes us to defend and affirm life itself. To this end, he suggests, hope is assertive and inherently collaborative.

Responding to climate change, thus, hope might regain some of its sapiential orientation. In an intrinsic sense, hope arises from within the human person. Treanor finds it helpful and perhaps even necessary to draw on the wisdom of Gabriel Marcel, outlining three defining characteristics of hope. By Marcel’s account, first, hope *asserts*. In other words, at its root, hope remains a rather “irascible” quality. In opposition to despair, hope makes claims about how we might adapt, move forward, act more justly. As an active disposition, not passive, hope leads Treanor to insist: “in the face of this uncertainty, the hopeful person exhibits a willingness to act as if her hope is well-founded.” In this audacity to act, relatedly, the hopeful person is in touch with what Gabriel Marcel describes as that “mysterious principle which is in connivance with me.”⁵⁰ Of course, “subjective” bases for hope are objectionable and questionable.⁵¹ But, concerning hope, Treanor draws on the participatory and unavoidably self-involving nature of hope. Third, according to Marcel, this mysterious sort of participation that hope beckons is inherently relational. Marcel’s term *connivance* can mislead. In the hopeful person, clarifies Treanor, it does not mean a

⁴⁹ This book chapter is revised from an earlier article, and again, also appears in a resubmitted form in Treanor, “Hope in the Age of the Anthropocene,” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 10 (2018): 1–22, cited at 6.

⁵⁰ Marcel, “On the Ontological Mystery,” 28, cf. Treanor, 104.

⁵¹ See, e.g., Williston, *Anthropocene Project*, 148–9, citing Adrienne Martin, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), and hope here is not equal to a “rational form of confidence in the possibility of a good outcome to a trial” (148). Skeptical, Williston does not see the connection between Gabriel Marcel’s “theological hope” and “the quasi-secular hope of Plenty Coups.”

deceitful scheme, nor reflects beguiling intentions; rather, as he supposes, “connivance” lends the insight “that hope finds a mystery by which I am called, among others, to *collaborate*.”

For climate ethics, responsively, hopeful actions are thus expressed in encounters and through acts of mutual assistance—and Treanor’s perspective calls our attention to ways that we are *already* partaking. Hope effectively, Treanor explicates, “demands my collaboration.”⁵² Born of mysterious depths, gradually, the person might become aware how she is growing in hope, and this imparts a different sense of resilience. As such, in a particular way, hope only is understandable on the other side of despair. Regarding climate change, the relevant point that Treanor wants us to remember is the possibility of a “return to hope.”⁵³ Like belief, he suggests, hope can take three possible routes: one might, on the one hand, be content “plunging into doubt” that would incapacitate or, on the other, simply adopt new beliefs as if a convert. Alternatively, hope can follow a third route: just as there is a belief beyond “belief,” a hope beyond “hope” is attainable. To clarify, Treanor states: “having passed through the crucible of doubt, it is impossible to return to the same belief in the same way.” Radically, in kind, hope becomes present in a new way. Thus, opposed to presumption, returning from despair rightfully chastens distortions in Treanor’s view such as humanity’s self-perceived “omnipotent ability to shape reality to match and satisfy our desires,” and possibly mature hope out of a belief “in the thaumaturgy of salvation by

⁵² Ibid., esp. 102–4. To articulate the choice of hope as a “hermeneutical wager,” in this section, Treanor draws heavily on Gabriel Marcel. The limits of this chapter do not allow a deeper consideration of Gabriel Marcel, who was a reader of Thomas Aquinas. To list a few pertinent texts, see: Marcel, “On the Ontological Mystery,” in *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: Citadel Press, 1975); idem, *The Mystery of Being*, vols. 1 & 2 (London: The Harvill Press, 1951–52); idem, *Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique* (Paris: Vrin, 1949); idem, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

⁵³ In Treanor’s account, this dynamic of hope draws on Paul Ricoeur’s account of “second naïveté.”

some omnipotent *deus ex machina*.” Rather, hopeful movements do not wait, but persevere in preparing the grounds for radical acts of hope. In this sense, admits Treanor, a reclaimed hope is “transformed, chastened, more prudent, more mature and perhaps somewhat tragic.”⁵⁴

5.1.4. *A Governing Hope*

If climate ethics requires models, beyond reimagining hope, practical examples demonstratively show the laborious effort and offer insights into what is demanded. The major contribution of Jenkins’s strategy of prophetic pragmatism is methodological, but also substantive. In a key article, prior to *The Future of Ethics*, Jenkins distinguishes his “analogical” model from other theological approaches to global problems, describing how it resolves some methodological impasses. Suggestively, he infers, adopting an “analogical model” can lead theological approaches toward more grounded, pragmatic understandings of hope. Drawing on the work of Graham Ward and David Tracy, Jenkins argues an analogical model is “capable of provoking alternative moral perceptions and of stimulating new social experiments, yet without relying on universal or even widespread acceptance of its own comprehensive vision.”⁵⁵

Communally, according to Jenkins, reform projects demonstrate that cultural transformation is essentially governed by hope. In this effort, according to Graham Ward, practices of Christian communities inherently are characterized with “a governing soteriology that pursues social transformation by means of opening up new utopian

⁵⁴ Treanor, “Hope in the Anthropocene,” *Analecta Hermeneutica*, 22.

⁵⁵ Willis Jenkins, “Global Ethics, Christian Theology, and the Challenge of Sustainability,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 12 (2008): 197–217, cited at 210.

possibilities in the prevailing cultural Zeitgeist.”⁵⁶ From a Christian viewpoint, Jenkins interprets grace as what sustains this concrete sense of hope, writing: “By continually seeking participable ways beyond the prevailing social imaginary, theo-ethical projects seek proleptic openings of the world to its future in God.”⁵⁷ In other words, within the resourcefulness and adaptive responses of Christian initiatives this ultimate purpose of human life motivates communities to act and adapt cohesively, and more justly. More broadly, by creating a space for hope, the distinctive shape of Christian hope also embraces the practical challenge of religious and moral diversity.

Guided by an “analogical” way of imagining hope this model has the practical advantage of exhibiting the type of cultural change that climate ethics needs. Regarding the analogical imagination, Jenkins’s comments are sparse, but serve as useful guideposts. In his view, the presence of religious difference intensifies rather than dilutes the eschatological import of hope. According to Jenkins, the analogical use of hope and the struggle for sustainability highlight the theological particularity of a reform project that “may then intensify through public collaboration.” Thus, he cites David Tracy, who claims: “each journey through the concreteness of a particular vision or tradition must be undertaken on behalf of the proleptic concreteness of that future global humanity which the present suggests and the future demands.”⁵⁸ Although scholarly viewpoints tend to neglect “theological vernaculars,” in this vein, Jenkins claims that actual communities of lived practice can inform and may inspire virtue responses to climate change.

⁵⁶ Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 168.

⁵⁷ Jenkins, “Global Ethics,” 211.

⁵⁸ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), specifically 449, cf. Jenkins, “Global Ethics,” 213 n13.

For an exemplary case, in this specific article, Willis Jenkins relies on South Africa's Church Land Programme (CLP) to underscore the benefits of the "analogical model." Jenkins would have us ask: "How do theological projects construct sustainability as a social problem?" Based in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in a post-apartheid context, the CLP challenged Christian churches, particularly the Anglican and Dutch Reform churches, to lead national debates about the racist legacies of land, ownership, and wealth. For the Church, this movement also focused the issue toward reforms of church-owned lands considering civil injustices and national struggle for universal freedom and reconciliation.⁵⁹ For Jenkins, in the context of climate change, the methodological point is relatively simple. An exemplary movement such as the CLP helps theological perspectives to begin to grasp the interconnections of what can seem "four rivalrous global projects," namely human dignity, poverty reduction, ecological degradation, and ethical obligations for future generations. For a political objective such as sustainability, the CLP contributes a scalable model. In response to climate change, this model exemplifies a governing hope as they learned "how to justly re-distribute land in post-Apartheid South Africa in a way that provides opportunity to the poor, protects agricultural security, and conserves environmental integrity."⁶⁰ As a theologically productive site, moreover, a reform project such as the CLP offers Christian responses crucial insights Jenkins explicates "by reclaiming biblical land narratives, rethinking relations of justice and ownership, and meditating on the theme of God's work in order to take specific steps toward agrarian

⁵⁹ For a development of this organization's ongoing work, see Mark Butler, "'Mines comes to bring poverty': Extractive Industry in the Life of the People in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," in *Environmental Justice, Popular Struggle, and Community Development*, eds. Anne Harley and Eurig Scandrett, 101–35 (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2019). For an updated statement of their mission and identity, see <http://www.churchland.org/za/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Finding-ourvoice-in-the-world.pdf> (accessed 26 June 2021).

⁶⁰ Jenkins, "Global Ethics," 210.

reform.”⁶¹ As such, therefore, the challenges of sustainability assume more concrete form that can mediate despair and wishful thinking.

Understanding the challenge of sustainability also as a particularly *religious* problem, furthermore, Jenkins highlights what Graham Ward identifies as a different logic. From a religious standpoint, embodied in a particular praxis, religious beliefs and desires are performed and enacted as a matter of demonstrating a “public truth.” For Jenkins, in response to climate change, this sensibility is fully exhibited in the strategic character of a moral community whose commitments are enacted regarding a particularly “wicked” set of problems. “If offered and received analogically,” proposes Jenkins, the hope of reform projects can demonstrate a certain kind of hopefulness and so might similarly stimulate others to respond likewise to concrete challenges.⁶² For Christians, simply, he remarks: “We are sustained by grace, and so we must sustain our openness to being transformed by graces not our own.” Cast accordingly, in *The Future of Ethics*, he frames a basic part of the theological task: “hope must be hard won.” Nevertheless, “in the face of problems that defeat moral agency and social cooperation,” he insists, “hope is vindicated through projects that adapt, invent, and expand the practices that open new possibilities of cultural action.” Whereas some might suppose hope needs the sapiential orientation that Treanor recognizes, in a reclaimed sense, Jenkins stresses hope in a different key. Whereas the wisdom of our traditions may have recognized how by virtue of participation we are

⁶¹ Ibid., 211.

⁶² Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 323, 325. For a distinction between “sapiential” and “eschatological orientation” of Christian hope, see Brian D. Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection: A Christian Theology of Presence and Absence* (New York: Crossroad, 2009), 238–9, also Stefan Skrimshire, “Eschatology,” in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, eds. Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott, 157–73 (New York: Routledge, 2014).

already involved, Jenkins evokes hope's imperfections, or what Christians refer to as "not-yet" pole of eschatological hope.

In parallel with the case of the Niger Delta, the CLP might provide a fruitful example with historical lessons. In a governing sense, the hope of this project is ongoing and incomplete. Jenkins wants to emphasize that for a Christian response, as exemplified in the CLP, the "secular" and political hope of sustainability is governed by a particularly religious sense of hope. For him, practically speaking, "analogical" models fulfill a modest purpose. "It takes only one successful farm transfer," he claims, "to demonstrate a reconciling land community that proves the civil possibility of agrarian reform that works good for the poor, fairness to property holders, fertility for the land, and hope for the future."⁶³ For Jenkins, though "marginal" in the social imaginary, reform projects contribute lessons in the "possible." Regarding the analogical imagination, however, David Tracy argues its power is rigorously refined in the recognition of similarity amid dissimilarities. At its origins, the CLP was attempting to reconcile its past, the memories of apartheid, and to reconcile the racial trauma of its history. In 1996, two years after Nelson Mandela's election, the Church Land Programme was officially instituted, amid other major land reforms—a objective that was deemed necessary as part of racial reconciliation. This is not the same history as that of the Niger Delta, but it does share a colonial past and legacies of racial supremacy. In a "governing" sense, these shared circumstances do suggest how the hope that governs the special case of reform is not simply engaged and proactive. More than reclaiming biblical land narratives, the CLP strives to reconcile their theological sense of hope with the obligation to cooperate with those beyond

⁶³ Ibid., 211.

their ecclesial life. The case signifies reform as the kind of shared, repentant practice that decisively commits to the difficult acceptance of grace and recognition that some ways of life must end. In this more prophetic spirit, responding to climate change, Jenkins may be provisionally correct in recognizing hope as provisionally defined both as an “arduous practical task” and a “form of waiting for transformation.”⁶⁴

5.1.5. *Seeds of Hope, Planting for the Kingdom: An Excursus*

Furthermore, the “governing” sense of hope that the analogical model provides also critically grounds climate ethics more deeply in rectifying terrestrial habits. On a more modest scale, thus, some examples such as the green sisters movement can shed light on how hope “functions.”⁶⁵ In many of their social experiments, across several different contexts, the eschatological theme of the Kingdom of God appears. The image of the “seed” is also ubiquitous. For example, consider Miriam MacGillis’s Genesis Farm. In 1990s, this site developed a community-outreach project called “Sowing Seeds of Hope.” One of its primary goals was to invite and encourage visitors and guests to nourish their own ecological praxis. With a seed-saving kit, MacGillis and her staff introduced basic but relatable steps for newcomers to participate in a wider network that was working to find, preserve, and cultivate “heritage” seeds. In Ohio, similarly, a community of Franciscan sisters also adopted the name “Seeds of Hope” for agronomic projects. Notably, “seeds” of hope are purposefully located in more vulnerable communities. For example, in Detroit, Elizabeth Walters, IHM, has developed an initiative of urban gardening that she has named “Hope Takes Root.” Since 1995, this project has attempted to address urban blight in

⁶⁴ Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics*, 325.

⁶⁵ For a case study of this movement, see chapter 4.

various abandoned lots that are scattered throughout the city's core, while providing shared communal space that offers some assistance to hunger prevention. In partnership with the Hunger Action Coalition, the gardens supply food provisions to neighboring soup kitchens. In Denver, similarly, EarthLinks is an ongoing collaboration between Cathy Mueller and Bette Ann Jaster, respectively, a Sister of Loretto and a Dominican. In directing urban organic gardens, they use these sites to mitigate the crisis of homelessness and to promote the dignity of work. In these and other Earth ministries, of course, green sisters integrate ecological with social concerns, but the hope is truly about preparing the grounds for a more integral "human ecology" that embraces the belief that human dignity and flourishing is inextricably tied with ecological well-being.

The seed is, of course, a potent image of promise. Hope may lead Christians to either the cross or the resurrection. In Plainville, during Holy Week, Dominican sisters host spiritual retreats around the theme of the "Earth's Passion," attempting to embrace the needs and suffering of the Earth within their hope. Here, however, I suggest we look at the seed as one of the paradigmatic signs that disclose what the Reign of God is like. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is recalled as saying the Reign of God is "like a mustard seed (*sinapi*)" (Lk 13:18-9). Variations of this parable, with the seed image, appear also in the Gospel of Mark (4:30-2) and Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 13:31-2).⁶⁶ In this parable, Jesus teaches the Reign of God becomes real from modest beginning; it quickly takes root, and its growth is rapid: "It is like a mustard seed that a person took and planted in the garden. When it was fully

⁶⁶ The earliest Gospel account reads: "It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade" (Mk 4:31-2). In the Matthean account, stressing the apocalyptic orientation, it is stated: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'" (Mt 13:31-2).

grown, it became a large bush and ‘the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches.’” Given an abundance of parables, in miniature, these moments tend to be overlooked in commentaries. But for Jesus’ disciples who could not understand or listen, Jesus offered their imagination a sense from whence eschatological hope originates—and how to look for the coming reign of God. Birds would easily be able to nest on a tree such as, say, a cypress; but the shrubby bush that grows from a mustard seed is not such a home. In spring, sown but uncultivated, a mustard seed over the course of a single season will eventually offer birds a branch to rest. We must neither lose sight of the person who knew where to toss the seed, nor the not-yet realized potential of the seed. As Jesus seems to suggest, these are lessons for how hope is fostered.

5.2 Toward a Dialogical Model: A Comparative Theological Experiment

For climate ethics, grounded in the emergence of hope as a virtue, we should consider seriously what a more dialogical approach might contribute. Regarding concrete challenges of climate change, as indicated above, a new grammar of hope is not the outcome of a single solution. Faithfully, Christians ought to recognize that although hope is theological, grace-informed virtue, God does not limit hope to exclusively to those within the Church. In response to climate change, a determining issue is: Will it be possible to believe not only that there are “graced” and infused virtues outside of the Christian church, but that will Christians permit the possibility that hope manifests “elsewhere”? In the Niger Delta, as a response, Nwachunkwu-Udaka’s attempt to practice hospitality involves mutual acts of “recognition.” Likewise, coming to see religious others as contributing partners and agents, not as rivals, is a starting point for cooperative action. In this vein, colonial patterns

of “divide and rule” might be reversed, as new forms of community involvement emerge and collaboration builds.

According to Ghazālī, particularly in his *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, hope is the spiritual disposition that in expectation remembers and prepares for the promise of God’s merciful forgiveness. For him, hope intrinsically fosters an eschatological orientation, but it also is derived from a particular way of knowing (*‘ilm*), an affective station (*hāl*), and a way of acting (*‘amal*). Analogously, in a holistic way, Thomas regards hope as comprehensive movements of the “wayfarer” (*viator*) toward loving union with God. Like Ghazālī, as noted earlier, hope is signified in the “pilgrim.” As a habitual disposition, not ephemeral, the virtues of hope according to Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī are located on the voyage and neither the destination nor the point of departure. Like Aquinas, the primary purpose of hope is to motivate actions and shape dispositions toward the greater good. Engaging the Ghazalian perspective, this meaning of hope can become intensified, and enriched, and it is also possible to learn more about ways of fostering hope.

In Ghazālī, we discover a different style and practical model for fostering hope. For all of Thomas’s conceptual clarity, his way of fostering hope cannot encompass how a challenge such as climate change affects virtue responses. More practical and pastoral in focus, Ghazālī invites readers to regard hope as a kind of “medicine” for the despair and fear that tend to ail seekers. Practically, he seeks to account for specifically how to foster the “therapeutic” benefits of hope. At the same time, fear might become a more effective “medicine” for those who are presumptuous, and who must become disabused of “wishful thinking.” Muslims and Christians might learn how to build resilience in response to climate change if they can come to hope in one another.

5.2.1 *Accepting an Imperfect Starting-Point*

The special purpose of inquiring further into building resilience, between fear and hope, leads us to notice imperfections. Whereas Ghazālī's understanding of hope (*raja'*) is drawn directly from the Quranic sense of hope as expectant yearning for divine mercy and forgiveness, Thomas outlines in hope (*spes*) the dynamic basis that enlivens faith and enables the struggle toward God's love.⁶⁷ Their accounts of hope, in common, clarify that hope ought not be confounded with ersatz similitudes. Analogously, hope stands in contrast to false hope in the way that it enables, supports, and sustains the "journey." As such, hope pertains to a certain mean between extremes. For Thomas, like passionate hope, the virtue is definitively left with an "irascible" capacity to seek the greater good, mediating despair and presumption. Like the "pilgrim," hope is primarily concerned with attaining its ultimate destination, and so must overcome obstacles and challenges, and yet needs to continue. In his judgment, Thomas sees this as a fitting and sufficient reason because life generally is "arduous." But, given the hope that signifies the disciple's movement ultimately toward union with God, Thomas remarks, "nothing else appears arduous, as compared with that hope."⁶⁸ In Ghazālī's portrait of hope, too, we find a similarly persevering disposition that is understood as capable of enduring and potentially overcoming challenges that tempt despair and presumption.

By way of entry into this dialogue, it can be illuminating to compare their starting points for articulating hope's virtues. According to Thomas, definitively, hope is an imperfect virtue. In pursuit of virtues, it is questionable whether virtues are ever fully

⁶⁷ For the Quranic basis of Ghazālī's conception, see Sheila McDonough, "Hope," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:448–9.

⁶⁸ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a2 obj2, reply in ad2

perfected. For Thomas, still, the import of defending hope's imperfections is especially urgent for validating its virtues. "Is hope a virtue?" In the *Secunda Secundae*, before focusing on the virtue of charity, Thomas examines hope in light of standard virtue categories: a virtuous habit itself (q.17); proper "subject" (q.18); (pneumatological) "gift" of fear (q.19); opposing vices of despair (q.20) and presumption (q.21); some brief concluding remarks about precepts of hope (q.22).⁶⁹ By starting basically, he is giving acknowledgement to preoccupations and prevalent doubts that are relatable to hope's questionable status. He concedes, thereby, hope is characterized by imperfection. In this respect, notably, Thomas treats hope in a manner different from the other two theological virtues of faith and charity. Whereas Thomas plunges into articulating those other two virtues, with which hope cooperates, hope's status requires careful attention. But, in sum, that imperfection is not a weakness but the source of hope's virtuosity.

As Thomas implies hope is profoundly shaped and informed by uncertainty, he nevertheless continues to argue, formally, hope is virtuous because the habit aids pilgrims to pursue a "future good, difficult but possible to obtain."⁷⁰ As a virtue, hope operates particularly in conditions that are "future," "arduous," "possible to obtain" and—due to God's grace—by the "assistance of another." In other words, generally, one of the virtues of hope is that it is always in motion and directed toward arduous endeavors. Unlike the "passion," according to Thomas, the virtue must *always* be directed at "something arduous"

⁶⁹ For perspective, whereas the virtue account of hope consists of six questions, the theological virtue of faith includes sixteen questions, and charity has twenty-four. The moral virtue of justice has over sixty questions. To be clear, Thomas asks this question of faith and charity; however, my basic point is that it is purposeful as the initial question. Thomas spares no preamble for hope, whereas he deliberates other basic issues prior to asking this question with respect to faith and charity, cf. IIa IIae q4a5, and IIa IIae q23a3. In *De spe*, Thomas provides 17 reasons to believe why hope is not a virtue; see *Disputed Question on Virtue*, trans. Jeffrey Hause and Claudia Eisen Murphy, 203–23 (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010); hereafter *DQV*.

⁷⁰ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a1 co.

and it requires the assistance of another. This direction, intrinsically, pertains “to the person who hopes.”⁷¹ Whereas the fear of being imperfect might prevent seekers from doing so, hope resolves the willingness to persevere. Simply, Thomas remarks: “Hope makes us tend to God.”⁷²

At the outset, by contrast, Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī connects hope to fear (*khawf*). Thus, whereas Thomas is preoccupied with showing how hope complements and cooperates with faith and charity, Ghazālī primarily seeks to focus on interconnections between fear and hope. Taken as two different but mutually related virtuous dispositions, explicitly, his method of fostering hope attempts to maintain this relation between them “despite their polarity and mutual antipathy.”⁷³ In addition to the image of fear and hope as “two wings,” Ghazālī reiterates, their relation as “two mounts” for “ascent along the path.” As joyful, hope is a praise-worthy state of expectation that appropriately perceives in the future what is most desirable, whereas in fear a different reaction is induced that typically is expectant in the future what brings “pain” and “distress” to the heart. There is, arguably, a role for resilience between these two expectant dispositions; however, the paradigmatic models they employ might draw the more generative capacity to resilience.

In Christ, Thomas believes that it is possible to understand the mysterious depths of hope since Jesus is the consummate “wayfarer” (*viator*). Furthermore, he adds, Jesus was subject to the “passibility of nature.” Jesus longed not to suffer, as dramatically remembered in the Passion accounts, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thomas, on the other hand, is reasonably ambivalent. He believes that Jesus Christ is not wholly the perfect

⁷¹ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a3 co.

⁷² *ST* IIa IIae q17 a5 ad3. For “movement of the mind,” see *De spe* a1 ad5 in *DQV*, 207.

⁷³ William McKane, trans., *al-Ghazālī’s Book of Fear and Hope* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), cited at 1.

model of hope because while it is conceivable that Christ hoped for “the glory of impassibility and immortality,” according to Thomas, theological hope “is not the glory of the body but the enjoyment of God.”⁷⁴ Christ, remarks Thomas, fully “comprehends” the “enjoyment of God.” Whereas Christian hope disposes us to tend toward God, in its fullest sense, Jesus incarnated this union with God. By faith, Christians regard no lack or imperfection. And yet, by Christian hope, discipleship might lead pilgrims beyond the “hope” of reward. Whereas hope pertains to “movement or stretching forth of the appetite towards an arduous good,” he describes charity as involving “union between lover and beloved.”⁷⁵ Though hope’s “imperfect disposition” is conceded,⁷⁶ it is this active search that disposes a different aptitude to overcome this distance. And yet, with the advent of charity, Thomas notes that the “movement of living hope” (*motus spei formatae*) conveys “good from God, as from a friend.”⁷⁷

Cultivating his developmental outlook, in common, Ghazālī’s focus combines a distinctly eschatological expectation and cooperatively growing wisdom. Drawing from Sufi traditions, in terms of a particular disposition, he presents hope as an enduring “station” (*maqām*) of one who seeks to foster commitment toward encountering God. By contrast to the modal emphasis in Thomistic conceptions, Ghazālī’s account outlines how

⁷⁴ *ST* IIa IIae, q18 a2, esp. obj1, co., rep1, and q17 a8 ad2; cf. about “living hope” (*de spe formata*) q17 a8 obj3 and ad3. For further suggested reading, see *ST* IIa IIae q23 a6 ad3: whereas “hope implies distance,” charity “does not regard that good as being arduous, as hope does, since what is already united has not the character of arduous: and this shows that charity is more perfect than hope.” See *De spe* a1 ad5 in *DQV*, 203–23.

⁷⁵ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a3 co. See *DQV*.

⁷⁶ *ST* IIa IIae q17 a1, cf. *DQV*.

⁷⁷ See *ST* IIa IIae q17 a8 obj3, and ad3. The English translation of *formatae* as “living,” that is presented as standard rendering in the work of the English Dominican Province, may neglect Latin connotations of “being fashioned,” or “having been shaped.” In this sense, drawing from Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas seems to be pointing to how hope proceeds *from* charity. Although hope precedes charity in terms of generation (from a basis of hope), charity is primary in terms of perfection.

to foster this balance in hope despite challenges, even “paralysis.” Here, setting aside the preferred image of the journeying “pilgrim,” Ghazālī’s students are invited to think allegorically about eschatological expectation. Like Jesus’ parable of the seed, it is agronomic. For Ghazālī, it is suggested, the present serves as a “field” for the hereafter, while the “heart” is analogous to the earth itself, and “faith” as a particular provision as identified in the “seed.” At this juncture, as he explains, Ghazālī’s operative metaphor sheds a different light on how to foster hope:

So when the creature sows the seed of faith and irrigates it with the water of obedience and cleanses the heart from the thorns of vicious moral traits and expects from the bounty of God his being established in that course until death and the virtue of the Seal that gives access to pardon, such expectation as his is hope in its essence, commendable in itself, and giving him an incentive for perseverance and endurance, in accordance with the means of faith, in perfecting the means of pardon until death.

The principal hope, as the agronomic image suggests, is anticipation of God’s mercy; and yet, hope emerges with the right conditions, and through labor. Whereas Thomas sees signs of hope if a good is “future,” “arduous,” “possible to obtain,” and by the “assistance of another,” the criteria that Ghazālī observes are slightly different. For him, radically, hope pertains to a future that is desirable, not feared. On a practical level, as this image suggests, hope is naturally complex and, he emphasizes, the abundance that it expects still requires divine provisions. As reflected in the promise of a harvest, and other less visible ways such as “repelling birds and blights,”⁷⁸ divine agency according to Ghazālī supports more basic conditions for fruitful outcomes.

In a way, akin to Di Paola’s gardener, Ghazālī’s image of hope underscores how this virtuous disposition is ultimately the result of actions “beyond one’s doing.” But,

⁷⁸ Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 4.3, cf. McKane, *Hope and Fear*, 4; hereafter citations to simplified McKane.

nonetheless, Ghazālī emphasizes that hope becomes manifest if necessary means are obtained and facilitated. When the outcome is “not yet determined,” Ghazālī explicates, the proper sense of hopeful expectation must assert itself. Just as the seeker strives to be in loving union with God, Ghazālī stresses that the farmer may be reasonably hopeful when the seed is sown that it will bear fruit. In this respect, attentive and careful praxis is still required. Fully aware, the farmer represents dependence on divine agency to be a “cultivator” and to be drawn onward toward the harvest. Continuing to use this allegorical image, Ghazālī will clarify the proper sense of hope to avoid its vicious extremes. Like Thomas, he identifies, a deficient kind of hope and distorted forms in excess, which he names “self-deception” and “wishful thinking.” Importantly, as the latter cases suggest, lacking proper consolidation of necessary means, the farmer may not have properly irrigated and pruned. But Ghazālī’s focus is primarily reinstating hope.

5.2.2 Lessons for a “Therapeutic” Praxis

A decisive difference between virtue accounts is whether speculative reflection or pastoral praxis should support hope. “Is the virtue of hope,” Thomas asks, “in the will as its subject?” “Is it in the blessed?” “Is it in the damned?” “Is there certainty in the hope of the wayfarer?” These are speculative exercises. For contemporary virtues, an inclination toward metaphysical faculties of the individual human soul may no longer be acceptable. Thomas approaches hope as a particular “habit of mind,” and continues to refer to despair as a source of sin.⁷⁹ A deeper reading of Thomas’s understanding of the will as “rational appetite,” that is, a human power that can move reason for the sake of the greater good,

⁷⁹ See *ST* IIa IIae q20 a3.

might offer a crucial shift.⁸⁰ However, in response to climate change, this direction would become liable to reducing the challenge to one's cognitive state. Scrutinizing one's "rational appetite" may result in the worst forms of moralizing. Furthermore, critically, this direction neglects the necessary work of supporting adaptive responses. For the sake of building resilience, it may not serve the purpose of fostering hope for others.

In stark relief from his philosophical counterparts, by stark contrast, Ghazālī demarcates how practical challenges of hope should be approached. To intervene in challenging cases, he shows that it is possible to foster a sense of hope that is both justifiable and deliberate. In other words, unless the means of hope are obtained and become facilitated, hope is not reasonable. With the "doctrine of the mean", loosening theoretical preoccupations, he elucidates how hope mediates between despair and presumption. In between vicious extremes, Thomas similarly locates hope, exercising judgment to determine hope's virtues according to a certain mean—the only of the three theological virtues to require for such a measure.⁸¹ For Thomas, the merits of hope become revealed once a virtuous agent "attains the supreme rule of human action," namely God.⁸² In turn, the movement of hope is the result of an informing grace, which enables and sustains this habit for the difficult but possible good. By contrast, Ghazālī widens perspective to paint a picture how hope itself becomes crucial for acting. Unlike Thomas's attention, that is, examining whether the subject of hope must be the will's "rational appetite" or whether despair is the origin of sin, Ghazālī's key question concerns how a

⁸⁰ For this characterization of hope, see *ST* IIa IIae q17 a1 ad1, q17 a5, q18 a1.

⁸¹ Interestingly, according to Ghazālī, the only two "mystical" virtues that warrant the doctrine of the mean are hope and fear. Sherif attributes this judgment to the basis of hope and fear within the "passions." As such, he considers his definitional understanding as corresponding loosely with the philosophical inheritance of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā. cf. Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory*, 133.

⁸² For suggested readings, see *ST* IIa IIae q17 a1, q17 a5 co.

seeker's hopeful disposition is to be formed through a distinct set of practices, learning from traditional narratives, and emulating exemplary figures.

Overall, Ghazālī's concerns proceed to further name dangers that undermine hope so as to disclose "salutary effects" of hope, and also the "way in which hope is induced by it." He subsequently advocates how, in turn, fear might "temper" hope. In a hopeful state, according to Ghazālī, actions characteristically are defiant: "Hence the state of hope produces sustained spiritual combat through actions, and perseverance in obedience, however fickle circumstances may be." As noted earlier, Ghazālī claims that while acting on account of hope should always be regarded as belonging to a "higher order" than the reasons that fear supplies, his contemporary generation is known for its presumption. As a result, he admits therefore his examination of fear is far lengthier than hope but, on numerous occasions, he reminds his readers hope is the preferred reason for action.⁸³

His "therapy" of hope is principally interested in addressing how a "pilgrim" arrives at a productive juncture between fear and hope. His concern is more immediate. Ghazālī focuses on how hope tends to go awry. Therefore, whereas Thomas attributes despair as a source of sin, the special focus of Ghazālī's exposition is refined in a far more pastoral manner. Analogously, Ghazālī formulates the "hope of mercy" as an enduring station that steadily mediates between excessive and deficient forms of hope, namely presumption and despair. His focus, however, takes a decisively pragmatic turn when he introduces two "extreme" and yet utterly familiar cases. First are those who despair, and second are those stricken with overwhelming fear. In the case where despair has settled in, the disposition prevails in such a prohibitive way inasmuch it "inhibits cultivation." In this first case, the

⁸³ McKane, 6 [141].

mercy of divine forgiveness is not believed to be possible. That hope is obstructed. A farmer, to use the foregoing image, lacks the capacity to sow the seeds, and irrigate them. On the other hand, reflecting a differing extreme, the second case displays the dominance of fear. It is possible that excessive fear can lead to despair. According to Ghazālī, recall, fear of God is the inverse of hope, not its opposite; it is a spiritual state in which the heart suffers in expectation of an adversity that it abhors, rather than with joy in expectation of a future good. For Ghazālī, and others in Sufi traditions, fear can become a virtuous “station” (*maqām*) with a proper measure that supports fruitfully religious practice. But, if imbalanced, an outlook of impending doom and punishment might engender scrupulosity. This state might not necessarily incapacitate practitioners; rather, as Ghazālī observes, subsequent actions are suppressed with a lack of joy. Thus, encourages Ghazālī, a *shaykh* (“spiritual guide”) must enter the darkness of seekers.

Along the journey is where Ghazālī locates hope, as he examines those conditions that tend to either arrest action due to despair or deaden action because of fear. Thus, in effect, Ghazālī captures the ambiguities of hope, while illustrating how hope is drawn from a reservoir of compassion for those in need and suffering. Widening his “frame,” Ghazālī assumes the figure of a masterful guide, whose presence signifies one who has attained the goal. The *shaykh*’s role, importantly, Ghazālī likens to that of the physician in restoring health. Between extremes, he claims, hope abides: “it is only when hope is at the mean state that its purpose—which is to energize the novice for knowledge and action—can be best fulfilled.” If imbalanced toward extremes of excess, Ghazālī notes that seekers languish, and become prone to “sloth” and “laziness.” If imbalanced in the alternative extreme, he notices tendencies toward fear-induced hopelessness, when they lose sight of

God's mercy. As he observes, a state of melancholy "stultifies action and might produce depression." In this sort of person, Ghazālī notes, this can result in a propensity to neglect other duties and responsibilities, especially in not acknowledging one's family's broader well-being. In accord, Ghazālī treats those in extreme need of hope, from the premise that only due to its effects is despair considered "blameworthy." Inasmuch as it "enervates" practitioners, despair is judged to the extent it leads to spiritual paralysis and inaction.

5.2.3. *Seeking Concrete Means: A Corporeal Turn*

Intimately connecting fear and hope, Ghazālī discusses extensively how fear is transformable and hope may become embodied. Just as a "discriminating" physician would intervene with patients, according to Ghazālī, a *shaykh* should intervene so that the desperate case "should be remedied by appropriate means." In a similar regard, Thomas responds that hope "withdraws us from evil things, and induces us to seek for good things." Following the notion that "we know habits by their acts," in hope, actions are led to pursue the future good even if it is "arduous." And so, human hopes are revealed in the way they align and pursue their aims with the greater good.⁸⁴ However, modeling ways to reinstate hope in others, Ghazālī directly provides an imprint of compassion in response to suffering. He demonstrates "assistance of another." Ghazālī explicates the main goal of his virtue account, with regards to hope, is "to participate and be exposed to its salutary effects."⁸⁵ For those who are disabled by the loss of hope, or others who are consumed with fear, he presents a choice. Revisiting his agronomic image, Ghazālī explains an avenue is provided to examine actions that reflect a proper state of hope:

⁸⁴ See *ST* IIa IIae q20 a3 co., and for the latter, e.g., *ST* Ia IIae q1 a1.

⁸⁵ McKane, 2.

For the man whose seed is fine and whose land is good and who has abundance of water is entitled to his hope, and his legitimate hope will continually urge him towards the oversight of the ground and the cultivation of it and the clearing of weeds which grow on it.⁸⁶

More plainly, given extreme cases, Ghazālī prescribes certain practices and actions based on “traditions of hope.” If hope is known by its acts, the farmer who desires a bountiful harvest, consolidates the “means” through seed, land, and abundant water. While harvests are not yet determined, hope moves the farmer to be careful, and vigilant, to tend and till the grounds and uproot whatever hinders fruitful cultivation. In effect, he suggests, hope may become a habit that is properly disposed by practice. Ghazālī gives, in a manner of speaking, the virtue of hope a corporeal turn, especially in the presence of a *shaykh*.

For “extreme cases,” Ghazālī prescribes traditions of hope that supply motivation. His sense of hope is grounded specifically with the Quranic notion of God’s forgiveness and mercy. In kind, humans are called to act according to the capacities for love, mercy, compassion, and the hope for reconciliation. In Abraham, the exemplary figure of a pilgrim, the Qur’ān identifies “an excellent model for you to follow, for those whose hope is in God and the last day” (Q 60:6). Following this path, hope becomes distinguishable from “wishful thinking.” The decision behind this Quranic verse, as alluded, is the step that Abraham had taken to separate himself from his clan to follow in the name of God.⁸⁷ Notably, this decisive separation includes a prayer that Abraham shares with his father in the hopes of forgiveness. In Abraham, radically, prophetic hope anticipates a future in God that reunites and reconciles with others despite of what separates them.

⁸⁶ McKane, 5 [140].

⁸⁷ “Lord, we have put our trust in you. We turn to you. You are our final destination. Lord, do not expose us to mistreatment from the disbelievers. Forgive us, Lord, for you are the Almighty, the All-Knowing” (Q 60:5).

Toward understanding God's mercy, as Ghazālī prescribes, desperate cases are offered ways to contemplate hope in select Quranic passages. For Muslims, of course, the Qur'ān is understood as divine speech, and so these passages convey a privileged cause for hope. Reciting God's own promises, one can instill self-sufficing reasons for hope and effectively reinstate a tangible sense of hope. For Ghazālī, in a significant way, the heart opens, expands, and moves with greater confidence that these promises will come to pass. For those in whom despair reigns, reciting Quranic verses attests directly to God's mercy. For the sake of developing a contemplative discipline, Ghazālī prescribes another locus for reflection that can be easily overlooked. He commends contemplation (*i'tibār*) of all the benefits and blessings that God bestows on "creatures in this world." Within this wider context of creation, he advises, the special and minute "adornment" of human beings must also be considered. Within the wider community of creation, Ghazālī explains reflection should not become preoccupied with causal explanations, rather in gratitude observe the goodness and beauty of the gifts of God's creation. Allowing us to step outside of ourselves, he claims, hope is restored by appraising what is already there and thus contemplation is nurtured by "remembrance" of God (*dhikr*) as merciful creator.

The key shift toward the breadth of God's mercy is found not only in Quranic origins, according to Ghazālī, is also identifiable in the Prophet Muhammad's example. Ghazālī reminds readers, subtly and gradually, that these inherited stories reveal hidden and invisible truths regarding hope. Whereas Thomas presents the theological sense of hope as directed toward that which is "attainable," namely union with God in love, Ghazālī supports hope in remembering God's merciful actions in the origins of the *umma*, its continuance, and ultimately in its judgment. Remembering God's mercy, from a Muslim

perspective, transforms the state of expectation. For Muslims ears, especially those who despair, Quranic verses and prophetic traditions of divine mercy intrinsically justify the ultimate grounds for hope. In turn, he supposes that these traditions of hope invite collaboration by their distinctively mysterious principles.

For his contemporary context, as highlighted, Ghazālī perceives fear might be the more effective medicine than hope. Around him, he notes, more lack fear than hope. To restore a proper balance between fear and hope, he argues that God’s mercy does not abolish God’s justice. In those who lack fear of God or any sense of judgment for actions, he supposes that a presumptuous hope unjustly rules. For these cases, the actions of the Prophet Muhammad (*sunna*) ought not be underestimated for rectifying the proper balance between fear and hope. For Muslim readers, literally, Ghazālī offers the reminder that the Prophet Muhammad’s leadership models the proper interplay between fear and hope. In the Qu’rān, for instance, it is stated: “For you there is in the Messenger of God an excellent model for anyone who has hope in God and the final day, and who remembers God often” (Q 33:21). Citing a “sound” tradition that portrays how Muhammad “cured” his people with the “therapy of hope,” Ghazālī guides reflection: “So observe how he was driving the people with the whip of fear and leading them with the reins of hope to God.” Whereas fear is typically what first prompts people toward urgent actions, Ghazālī explains, once people have exceeded the “point of equilibrium to the extreme of despair,” the Prophet Muhammad shows how to intervene as though a physician. In this manner, he adds, “he cured them with the therapy of hope and returned them to the equilibrium and the goal.”⁸⁸

⁸⁸ McKane, 16-7.

Unlike in Thomas's articles, we find Ghazālī's exposition is replete with narratives of hope that are neither adduced with much introduction nor adorned with substantial commentary. In creative tension between fear and hope, Muslims might understand from Ghazālī's account the purpose is to approximate the proper sense of hope in God's mercy. For some, the Prophet Muhammad leads toward the difficult destination with a sense of fear that refers to the way the heart suffers in expectation of adversity. In others, his example instills a sense of fear in the judgment of God. However, against persecution and through exile, his struggle epitomizes the sense of hope that is also accompanied with a healing sense of compassion. Just as the Prophet Muhammad's leadership reveals how God responds "with the eye of a physician," Ghazālī explicates, the "learned" (*'ulumā'*) need to deploy the "means of hope."⁸⁹ Hope, in its absence, must draw deeper commitment from them, the "heirs of the prophets." In sum, he relates "just as the discriminating physician" ought to act, wisdom informs us that fear and hope are "means of healing with respect to different kinds of sick people."⁹⁰

As he names some grounds for hope, Ghazālī implies others in traditions that he approvingly cites. Crucially, a major question is: What distinguishes hope-filled actions? For him, critically, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, Zayd al-Khayl, encapsulates the hopeful disposition. In this tradition, when approaching the Prophet Muhammad, Zayd al-Khayl asked how God identifies between the "person who aspires and the person who does not aspire." In this context, aspiration reflects the sense of hope

⁸⁹ McKane, 11. Most people suppose, as Ghazālī observes, the means for happiness falls within their power. And yet, given the "Practice of God" is characteristically merciful, forgiving, and generous, he speculates in all probability it is justifiable to assume that the hereafter offers the full means for happiness.

⁹⁰ McKane, 10.

in receiving divine mercy—and ultimately enjoying happiness with God on the Day of Judgment. In reply, the Prophet asked, “How do you go about it?”

I have made a practice of loving virtue and its people, and, whenever I have the capacity for anything belonging to it, I make haste towards it and I believe firmly in its reward. And, when anything belonging to it eludes me, I am grieved thereby and yearn after it.⁹¹

In Zayd al-Khayl, the lover of virtue, Ghazālī identifies a driving factor; however, it is left for the reader to discern its import. For Thomas, despair is hope’s opposite precisely because it refuses to partake and share in God’s goodness; by contrast, understandably, hope enables and strives toward that ultimate goal. For Thomas, grounded in the notion of *imago dei*, humanity can participate in this divine goodness because profoundly God has created us in the divine image. God’s goodness, fundamentally, shapes the human condition. In Zayd al-Khayl, analogously, the hope-filled insight is that God’s goodness is recognizable in the actions and habits of others.

Interpersonal encounters are the focal place where Ghazālī is attempting to model prospects of fostering hope. The alert reader will notice that the spontaneity of Zayd al-Khayl’s hopeful response foreshadows a conflictive episode. In another tradition, Ghazālī recalls a contrasting tradition of hope that is associated with Jesus. One day, after forty years of pillaging the people of Israel on their roadways, a robber was passed by Jesus—and, shortly thereafter, one of Jesus’ disciples. Overwhelmed with a “desire to draw near to the disciple,” the robber dared to approach. When he did, the robber “demeaned himself and magnified the disciple,” who, in reaction, was alarmed. The pace of Jesus’ disciple immediately quickened to put distance between the robber and himself, and to pull astride Jesus. In that instant, as Ghazālī recounts the rest of the tradition:

⁹¹ McKane, 6. After conversion, this companion was renamed Zayd al-Khayr (“the good”).

So God revealed to Jesus: Say to them both: Assuredly the works of both of you are under review, and I have annulled whatever proceeded from your respective works. I have annulled the good works of the disciple because of his pride in himself, and I have annulled the evil works of the other, according to the measure of his disparagement of himself. So tell these tidings to both of them.⁹²

By a story of conversion, Ghazālī impresses upon his readers the inexhaustibility of divine mercy, and even the spontaneity of hope-filled responses. The tradition also raises important questions about inordinate hope and enduring lessons into poverty of spirit.

The story might illustrate an important tension that affects how fear shapes hope, and vice versa. “For [anyone] who feels security from God’s wrath,” Muhammad Quasem comments, “fear is more useful, but if [someone] is in despair of His mercy, hope should be made more dominant in the soul.”⁹³ Quasem interprets fear as based in God’s wrath. But Ghazālī never states divine agency as such, but in terms of God’s justice. In this manner, Mouhanad Khorchide repudiates “wrathful” interpretations, if they evaluate God’s wrath as vengeful for disobedience. Instead, from his Islamic viewpoint, God’s wrath “should rather be perceived as a call to mankind to uphold the divine incentives of mercy, justice, and compassion.”⁹⁴ The prophetic tradition that Ghazālī uses is suggestive. If it is taken in a more punitive sense, the disciple’s good works do not fully predict his future reward. This is presumptuous. However, as the disciple draws near to Jesus, the key point may be that the disciple fails to uphold the sense of mercy, justice, and compassion to which the disciple is being called. And yet the robber’s history does not preclude him from

⁹² For an English translation, see McKane, 6. For this narrative in Ibn Hisham’s biography of the Prophet Muhammad, cf. Alfred Guillaume, trans., *The Life of Muhammad* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 4:245. The original source of this story is unknown. In his annotated translation, McKane does not include its provenance. Nor is it identified in Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁹³ Quasem, *Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 165.

⁹⁴ Mouhanad Khorchide and Ufuk Topkara, “A Contribution to Comparative Theology: Probing the Depths of Islamic Thought,” *Religions* 4, no. 1 (2013): 74 (67–76).

receiving God's forgiveness. As a matter of fact, spontaneously, the robber is open to transformation from graces not his own.

For Christian discipleship, especially in the face of fear, hope seems to make a similar claim upon habits of being. For the sake of building resilience, it is necessary to resolve the relation between fear and hope. In effect, Ghazālī argues, fear and hope ought to mutually shape one another, and, in a sense, he shows them not only as complementary, but also mutually reinforcing virtues that sustain a purpose-driven disposition. As challenging as it may be, Ghazālī's perspective into fear and hope as intertwined and potentially of mutual benefit can guide insights into Thomistic hope. His approach clearly does not seek to eradicate, nor suppress, fear. For Ghazālī, the internal state of the heart might become more stable with a mature sense of hope, which may justifiably expect eschatological "rewards." Also, a transformed sense of fear, which recognizes the separation between where we stand and the destination we want to reach, contracts the heart in moments of presumption. Acting spontaneously out of hope, he supposes, is what the ultimate aim of all rightly guided seekers. In light of Ghazālī, there is a privileged place to recover a key dynamic that shapes the complexion of Thomas's hope.

This mutual pairing of fear and hope in Ghazālī's account elucidates the fact that Thomas names "fear" as a corresponding divine gift.⁹⁵ One of Ghazālī's key insights into fear and hope is that relationally, in a dialectical sense, hope is created anew, and the dynamics of fear are reversible. That virtuous fear that Thomas identifies is the result of a "gift" of the Holy Spirit that informs hope. It is a dynamic of Thomas's account that is relatively marginalized. Nonetheless, while articulating hope, Thomas himself clarified

⁹⁵ Thomas provides a corresponding "gift," as associated with the Holy Spirit, to each of the seven virtues he names: three theological virtues, and four cardinal virtues.

how he understands fear, with a fourfold sense that distinguishes the more virtuous sense from baser passions. For Thomas, basically, whereas “human” fear is the normal reaction whenever the possibility of harm is evoked, “worldly” fear is a contrasting sense that is based in and clings to what Thomas labels “worldly loves.” Relevant for potentially treating “climate anxiety,” when one clings to material possessions, an anxious fear arises in part due to an attachment that confuses materials for ends in themselves. For Thomas, however, these two forms of fear only partially encompass what he considers the fuller import of fear. Presumably, like hope, fear is capable of maturing and transforming so that that one who comes to know God, instead fears the “veil.” Thomas’s use of “veil” evokes a separation between the seeker and God. One can see and perceive through a veil, but as permeable as it is the veil is still a barrier of sorts.

Here, incisively, Thomas proceeds to parse two other varieties of fear that have as their source the Holy Spirit. In seeking ultimate happiness in communion with God, a “servile” fear characterizes those who are disposed to simply avoid punishment. Thus, in conscience, they follow the Holy Spirit but only to avoid God’s wrath. This fear is not wrong. But it is not, according to Thomas, the standard sense of fear. A “filial” fear, received by way of grace, befits those who wish to overcome the distance that separates them from God. In tension with hope, Thomas thinks that it is this fear that attains proper balance. Thus, he remarks: “filial fear and hope cling together, and perfect one another.” For Thomas, revealingly, this sense of fear is suited for more perfectly fostering hope:

It is fear of punishment that decreases when hope increases, but with the increase of the latter filial fear increases, because the more certainly a man expects to obtain a good by another’s, the more he fears to offend or to be separated from him.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ For suggested reading, in this light, see *ST* IIa IIae q19 a9 ad1, q19 a10 ad2, and q19 a5.

Thus, fear not only reshapes hopeful responses, but hope also transforms fear. In this manner, fear and hope cooperate, seeking to overcome what continues to separate.

As Ghazālī's extensive deliberation points out a different relation between fear and hope, his narrative account helps elucidate Thomas's special regard for the communion of saints. In following Jesus, saintly lives attest to the pursuit and enactment of the greater good. But their lives also attest to moral struggle and spiritual resilience. Do they hope? As "friends," Thomas states, saints "are in actual possession thereof."⁹⁷ By way of enjoying friendship with God, he replies: once "obtained," the saints do not hope for the "continuation" of happiness. Rather, correspondingly, saintly lives also suggest a certain kind of fear, that is, a fear of being separated from God. At first, saintly lives may simply demonstrate the quest to avoid sin and evil. But the saintlier lives come to expect charitable love from God, as from a friend, the more they demonstrate fear of separation or offense. While divine reason prompts saints, Thomas understands, others may need to be called differently. In numerous circumstances, Thomas judges therefore: "just as the wise [*sapientes*] and prophets who, consequently, strove to strengthen people in the observance of the Law, delivered their teaching about hope under the form of admonition or command, so did they in the matter of fear." Thomas does not elaborate what he means. For the sake of the common good, following his train of thought, we can insist that prophetic calls of justice rightfully unsettle wishful thinking.⁹⁸

Ghazālī's pastoral-pragmatic approach to hope, furthermore, underscores that Thomas primarily understands that hope flows from charitable love. As saints and "friends" of God demonstrate, likewise, Christians according to Thomas shall become more hope-

⁹⁷ *ST* IIa IIae q18 a2 obj2, ad2.

⁹⁸ cf. *ST* IIa IIae q22 a2, a2 ad3.

filled as they seek to emulate this hope *for* others. It is a point that Ghazālī’s inclusion of a *shaykh* helps underline. Hope, acknowledges Thomas, is “distressing.”⁹⁹ Contemplating friendship with God as the perfect good, the prayer that Jesus teaches his disciples guides Christians to understand how terrestrial, social, carnal hopes can become salutary when directed toward God. The Lord’s Prayer not only expresses hope, but it also embraces in prayer the everyday, Thomas says, for “goods, both temporal and spiritual.”

5.2.4. Seeking “Living Acts of Hope”: Key Takeaways for Climate Ethics

For the sake of building resilience, between fear and hope, these virtue accounts are resourceful in addressing the intellectual and moral virtues needed, as well as the affective dispositions that are required. Intellectually, for current purposes, the different perspectives on hope can supplement the goal of building resilience. In becoming less subject to despair and presumption, hope names a way of thinking in response to climate change that is resolved to pursue both the more proximate and remote ends. For climate justice, fostering certain intellectual habits, the enduring virtue of hope provides a more capacious way of thinking in response to arduous challenges. For instance, integrally, hope supposes the “assistance” of another. Critically, therefore, hope prepares and also anticipates the grounds for this more cooperative outlook in response to specific tasks of climate change. Amidst instability, hope’s resiliency may dispose the hopeful person to become more receptive and open to the contributions of others. The prior point, in actuality, is that hope prompts us to acknowledge and embrace the need for the other.

Affectively, second of all, hope’s resolve supports the possibility of acting in the face of uncertainty—and despite our imperfections. In this regard, as these classic virtue

⁹⁹ See *De spe* al obj13, in *DQV*, 204, specifically lines 68–70. This treatise is roughly contemporaneous with his articles on the virtue of hope in *ST*.

accounts claim, hope engenders an ability to confront fears. In tandem, transformatively, a virtuous sense of fear offers counterbalance: wherefore hope can be matured, recovered, and even become restored. For Christians, Thomas argues the progression and perfection of hope relies ultimately on God's grace—a transforming love that draws human participation toward the greater good. In a radical sense, Ghazālī nurtures a sense of remembering how God has acted, perceiving how God continues to instill hope, and in a manner that “prevails over the heart” anticipating what God promises in the future. These are habituated practices. Abundantly, Ghazālī presents images that show how hope imparts resilience. In this communal way, he lends insight into conditions that help build resilience. For this reason, hope transforms resilience with mutual “assistance” of another.

Now, what would this look like in response to climate change? Third, reflecting upon hope, some insights are available for methodically building resilience in response to concrete challenges. This question underscores the moral point of this exercise. For many who espouse climate justice, the model is the civil rights movement—a historical example that illustrates concrete steps, virtuous activities, and necessary dispositions that are urgently required for cultural transformation. Mary Robinson, for instance, harkens towards the exemplary manner of this movement to assist her readers in apprehending the political challenge. The key point, however, is the democratic display of political power in people assembling, agitating, and working in solidarity across differences.¹⁰⁰

From a Thomistic viewpoint, Michael Lamb draws a finer point regarding “friendship,” “common projects,” and hope. Charity is not legally bound, but rather a

¹⁰⁰ In this spirit, see, e.g., Jenkins, “Doing Theological Ethics with Incompetent Christians: Social Problems and Religious Creativity,” in Marsh, Slade, and Azaransky, *Lived Theology*, 54–66, esp. 61–3. For climate ethics, see Ray Galvin, “‘Let justice roll down like waters’: Reconnecting Energy Justice to Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement,” *Energy Research and Social Science* 62 (2020): 101385.

friendly “duty” that is derived from what is either pleasing or useful. In terms of practices that habituate, similarly, the challenge of hope calls for a more rigorous method that provides the possibility to thrive in adaptation and learn through adverse transitions. In the pioneering example of the civil rights movement a communal process of habituation is exemplified. In this movement, according to Lamb, one can analyze the ways that hope grew particularly by “repeating virtuous acts of hoping in fellow citizens, learning from past experiences of hoping in others, and emulating virtuous exemplars.”¹⁰¹ In light of the comparative exercise, critically, it must be concluded that this way of describing a process of fostering hope more accurately encapsulates a Ghazalian sense of hope as substantiated in his pastoral-pragmatic approach than the Thomistic account. Nevertheless, responding to social problems, this emphatic hope is less interested in navigating presumption and despair, and more primarily focused on pursuing the good. As such, “inspired and informed by their religious commitments,” Lamb remarks on the outlook that cohered the civil rights movement, “they relied on the assistance of diverse citizens who shared their democratic commitments but not their Christian faith.”¹⁰² For climate ethics, in this way, we can revisit the case of the Niger Delta and “living” hope that climate change witnesses exemplify.

5.3. *Coming Back to Hope: Reinterpreting the Grounds for Climate Ethics*

The question remains: how might it become possible to build resilience in response to climate change? While this comparative theological exercise illuminates ways hope imparts resilience, or at least enhances capacity for resilience, alone it is insufficient. As I conclude this chapter, thus prompted by this exercise, I want to move in a direction that

¹⁰¹ Michael Lamb, “Aquinas and the Virtue of Hope: Theological and Democratic,” *JRE* 44, no. 2 (2016): 300–32, cited at 324; see also 318–9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 328.

accords with specifically the “political hope” of dialogue. Returning to the case of the Niger Delta, we must collectively discern what is necessary to build resilience. Furthermore, this case may also help us articulate further links between hope and resilience. Given this case, we shall propose specifically personal, communal, and ecological ways that hope may contribute insights into building resilience that allow the possibility of flourishing.

5.3.1. Reconsidering Resilience in Light of Living Hope

Turning to “climate change witnesses,” climate ethics can suggest a more adequate sense of the resilient people we can become. Relatedly, these exemplary figures can offer reasons for hope in a way is necessary for reframing the Niger Delta case. As Robinson narrates, in the aggregate, the witnesses who resolutely and relentlessly pursue climate justice are iconic because they offer perspective into the many facets of resilience. As such, these exemplary figures, many of them women, offer much to climate ethics. Therefore, while they testify to their experience in some of the regions most affected by climate change, their contributions exceed detailing hardships of food insecurity, water scarcity, deforestation, and other climate-related impacts. Their public witness exemplifies the ongoing struggle for climate justice and demonstrable qualities of resilience. From a Thomistic viewpoint, out of a sense of the common good and the good of others, these figures offer “acts of living hope” that may move others. Thus, for present purposes, consider two specific “climate change witnesses.”

Take, for example, Constance Okollet. Since 2006, in Uganda, she has publicized how the change in climate has tested her community and their region with both extreme cycles of drought and torrential rains. “This is outside our experience,” she contends. Both factors prevent her and her people from planting their traditional crops, as they had done

for generations. In 2008, with other local women, she created the Osukuru United Women's Network in Uganda for the sake of promoting more communal responses. As chair, Okollet focused not only on the effects of climate change but also gradually on how to practically build community resilience. "Beneath the giant mango tree in her dusty red compound," Robinson reports, "Constance invited her neighbors to gather each week and share their problems." Her usual message is as steadfast as it is simple: since climate change is here to stay, practical steps are needed to repair relations with creation. "Every Sunday," Okollet says, "I travel to different parishes and speak after Mass." Weekly, she teaches that the dramatic weather shifts are the result of industrialized processes from "developed countries," not God's displeasure. Several local initiatives act to plant trees in a systematic manner that can strategically provide a way to counteract some effects of climate change, especially preventing erosion. For neighbors who refuse, she says, "I tell them to simply think of their grandchildren."¹⁰³

In Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Robinson recognizes a different source of hope and one who provides a resolute sense of resilience. From Chad, Ibrahim has emerged as a leader on the international stage. Her country is one of the places most affected by climate change, and her people—the Peule-M'bororo—bear a burden not of their own making. Since 1970, Lake Chad—the wellspring and main source of livelihood in the Sahel region—has shrunk by 90%. This fact threatens their subsistent and nomadic way of life. Dependent on cattle, the thirty-five-year-old Ibrahim explains that even within her lifetime their pastoral lifestyle has become radically altered. Whereas in her childhood, daily, a cow

¹⁰³ See Robinson, *Climate Justice*, 17–8, 19–25. For her original consideration of Okollet, see Mary Robinson, "Social and Legal Aspects of Climate Change," *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 5 (2014): 15–7, esp. 15.

usually produced two liters of milk during the rainy season, now cows can only provide milk every other day and usually no more than a single cup. She explains how gender is connected to ecological problems: “constraints imposed by the changing climate impact the M’bororo women the most.”¹⁰⁴ For example, women must trek greater distances, carrying water from its source. Moreover, there is the danger of wisdom disappearing. Ibrahim explains: “Women see their traditional medicines evaporate, preventing grandmothers from passing on to their daughters and granddaughters the names of plants that can cure diseases.”¹⁰⁵

Like Okollet, in the name of climate justice, Ibrahim has become a regular voice at UN climate meetings. In her native Chad, she has established the Association des Femmes Peuples Autochtones du Tchad, disclosing: “To be an indigenous woman is a double marginalization.”¹⁰⁶ After the failure of COP15 in Copenhagen, Ibrahim was elected as co-chairwoman of the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change, focusing her advocacy on a single platform, namely expanding the role of indigenous peoples as constitutive for future climate actions. For her, the need to build resilience ought not be reserved for the poor and marginalized; rather, as she judges, energy transition in wealthy nations should be imperative for enhancing resilience for all. Locally, she has noticed a shift. Whereas her community once dismissed her largely due to gender, now, elders identify in her actions and advocacy their own aspirations for survival, saying, “She is our hope.” Regarding climate change, she recognizes, tribal elders become frustrated and overwhelmed with navigating its unpredictable patterns. “They believe that perhaps we are

¹⁰⁴ For passages in *Climate Justice* on this figure, Ibid., 56, 57, 59–60, 65–70, and 128–9.

¹⁰⁵ For her account, see Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, “Indigenous Peoples and the Fight for Survival,” in *This Is Not a Drill: An Extinction Resistance Handbook*, ed. Vandana Shiva (London: Penguin, 2019), cited at 56.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 45.

bad people, and so we must pray and make sacrifice,” explains Ibrahim, “They just believe in God, and God will bring a solution.”¹⁰⁷

Re-defining resilience, climate change witnesses such as these figures draw attention toward what it means to struggle for climate justice. With its stress on moral competencies, the psychologized definition falters when it confines such adaptive responses to coping strategies. In accord with hope, in a more radical manner, these examples are more responsive to communal needs. Emphatically, resilience is an affective disposition. As a virtuous disposition, resilience involves seeking to respond to suffering and communal needs in a particularly resolute and resourceful way. In some ways, it requires discovering interconnections between different dimensions of suffering. In some circumstances, more resilient responses are geared toward “recovery,” while others adopt a long-term orientation about what it would take for future generations to adapt well to climate change. Resilience-building, distinctly, brings special focus toward preconditions for flourishing, as a “context-sensitive” appeal to cooperation and mutual assistance.

Redefining resilience, in the Niger Delta, the Igbo virtue concept for resilience (*dimkpa*) designates a culturally specific virtue. It is a virtue that is understood as necessary and required to pursue an authentic vision of flourishing. Considering hope, derived by virtue of a common project, they indicate a sense of resilience that goes beyond a coping strategy. Rather, their hope-filled resilience dignifies the challenge of climate justice. In this sense, although aware that any climate “solution” is remote, the resilience may resonate with the determined sense of moral agency that is expressed by Ibrahim: “We need to manage our own way forward.”¹⁰⁸ According to Robinson, Okollet as a “female farmer

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 47. See also Galvin, “‘Let justice roll’,” 5 n61.

from Uganda” similarly embodies “the ultimate narrative of hope: an everyday climate change witness.” For her, Okollet is a “constant reminder of the extraordinary power of grassroots women, those who experience the effects of global warming in a personal way and use their voices and courage to effect change.”¹⁰⁹ In response to communal needs, according to hope, these exemplars underscore the good of the other as inseparable from their own personal good. Inasmuch as resilience conveys the adaptive capacity to recover, the Igbo virtue concept may fill in what climate justice means because of its insistence on taking into account communal needs and keen awareness of ecological suffering. While providing narratives of hope, exemplary agents are not fearless, but call us to empathize. Hope intermingles with fear. In this sense, we may understand differently what, definitively, resilience means in light of climate change. Instead of a moral virtue concerned with “competence,” primarily, resilience stems in an affective manner from a relational basis of care. Rather than attempting to abdicate fear, in deeper recognition, climate actions that aim to build resilience can focus upon maintaining social relations, enacting responsibilities for others, and seeking to avoid greater suffering.

5.3.2. Dialogue Beyond Solidarity: Building Resilience via Mutual Assistance

At the heart of dialogue, out of mutual assistance, resilience summons the support of another. In Nigeria, as suggested, interreligious actions might be a more realistic possibility if religious communities adopted a communal praxis of hospitality. In Port Harcourt, a city that mirrors “tribal” divisions, a culture of mistrust has developed between Muslims and Christians recently. Much of this tension centers on land disputes.¹¹⁰ A useful

¹⁰⁹ Robinson, *Climate Justice*, 25.

¹¹⁰ For this draft of the case study, the following articles were consulted: Abdul Razaq Kilani, “Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in the Niger Delta,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000): 129–

model of hospitality that addresses both ecological matters and religious friction in tandem is “A Rocha Kenya” (ARK), a Christian organization based in East Africa.¹¹¹ There, promoting the common good and defending the environment, the ARK invites Christians, Muslims, and others to approach problems from the basic premise that creation belongs to God, and is fundamentally good. Although grounded in a biblical viewpoint, the organization has discovered a receptive audience in their Muslim neighbors who share this theological affirmation and similar religious grounds for conservation. Under the auspices of Christian hospitality, by bringing together multiple voices, these communal actors prioritize preservation of the local biodiversity, with special concern for mangrove habitats along the Kenyan shores of the Indian Ocean.¹¹² On the basis of communal actions, as Pope Francis states, restorative models support how “a new social fabric emerges.”¹¹³

As the case of the Niger Delta suggests, climate ethics needs to be disposed toward reconciling inter-communal divisions. The case also illuminates the material difference that Muslim-Christian cooperation can make. In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, “born of dialogue,” Pope Francis championed the promotion of common life, especially between Muslims and Christians, with the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib. In 2018, Pope Francis and Ahmad al-Tayyib issued a joint statement entitled “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.” Reaffirming a key point of *Laudato si’*, they jointly agreed that responding faithfully to the ecological crisis requires a deeper “human

36; Carlo Koos and Jan Pierskalla, “The Effects of Oil Production and Ethnic Representation on Violent Conflict in Nigeria: A Mixed-Methods Approach,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28 (2016): 888–911.

¹¹¹ For information on this faith-based organization, see “A Rocha,” <https://www.arocha.or.ke> (accessed 3 December 2021). In Portuguese, the official name means “The Rock.”

¹¹² For a fuller profile, see Joanna M. Moyer, “Faith-based Sustainability in Practice: Case Studies from Kenya,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2015): 42–67, esp. 47–54.

¹¹³ *Ls’*, no. 232.

fraternity by safeguarding creation.”¹¹⁴ In the conciliatory spirit the encyclical sought, these interlocutors sought to enact commitments and recognize them in the other through their dialogue “for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity” (sec. 201). Two years later, in 2020, Pope Francis remembered lessons of this experience on what it means to be an “artisan of peace” (sec. 284). In part, it requires the choice of dialogue over division. In a spirit of friendship, Pope Francis advises, a fulfilling dialogue thinks about the future. For the sake of becoming “people of dialogue,” as he proposes, we should “place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others.”¹¹⁵

Intellectually, considering hope, resilience engenders a particular way of thinking in response to climate change. Recognizing the benefits of a deep interdependence, in a hopeful spirit, resilience privileges cooperation and relies on the “assistance of another.” In hopeful actions, climate change witnesses such as these are bidding that these appeals anticipate the reconfiguration of what flourishing means. In accord with hope, building resilience may gain its future orientation as an intergenerational, broadly collaborative enterprise. It also depends on how dispositions of resilience are modeled. Again, resilience is “context-sensitive.” For this reason, resilience is not uniform. Of course, as the case of Niger Delta highlights, the need for religious responses to become involved with the complex political problems can intensify.

In Nigeria, Nwachunkwu-Udaka observes that religious identities tend to fracture along sectarian lines, as political leaders stoke “tribal” divisions. This pattern has

¹¹⁴ Joint statement, “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” 4 February 2019, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, signed by Pope Francis and Ahmad al-Tayyeb, available online.

¹¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), sec. 196.

predetermined prospects for Muslim-Christian cooperation. The effort of this climate change witness, in a manner that Pope Francis echoes, is geared toward sowing seeds that others will reap. As the case of the Niger Delta suggests, this moral point about fostering hope registers an important consideration for building resilience: namely, it prioritizes pre-conditions. In response to this colonial pattern, by contrast, his appeal to the Igbo virtue concept of “resilience” (*dimkpa*) offers an inclusive meeting-point that is potentially available to both Muslims and Christians in the Niger Delta.

Underlining the difference resilience creates, let me attempt to make this point more broadly. In response to *Laudato si'*, Willis Jenkins comments that the encyclical seems to undervalue the “political hope” that dialogue represents. For instance, Jenkins criticizes how from Pope Francis’s case could have further claimed “the role of creation in forming human dignity.”¹¹⁶ For Jenkins, the key benefit that “analogical” modeling provides is the acknowledgment of communal “weakness.” For example, in the case of the Church Land Programme (CLP), Jenkins seeks to show that Christians “perform their vernaculars in solidarity with all those communities seeking adequate responses to problems that threaten all earth.” However, as Christians, they also become aware that their own virtue responses struggle to include all creatures in their theological vision of flourishing.¹¹⁷ For climate ethics, the analogical model enables a critical and self-critical stance. The political hope of dialogue, therefore, is to discover in that “weakness” a transformative space. Toward reconciliation, in effect, vulnerability becomes a capacity for transformation and growth. This is one way resilience might be cultivated.

¹¹⁶ Jenkins, “Mysterious Silence,” 442: “I argue that the encyclical’s theological reorientation unnecessarily stops short here, which leaves its political hope in dialogue weaker than it should be.”

¹¹⁷ Jenkins, “Global Ethics, Christian Theology,” 213, 214.

Some would claim that this is how solidarity works. Jenkins thinks this is the task of solidarity. But, as an intellectual virtue, solidarity is the intellectual labor that stresses structural and systemic injustices. For Brazal, in the wake of trauma, the first impulse is to similarly frame resilience in terms of solidarity. For instance, the example set by the Tzu Chi Foundation, a Buddhist organization in the Philippines, and its master Cheng Yen, is noteworthy. As volunteers, and themselves survivors, this Buddhist group observed how amidst the tsunami's devastation their Catholic neighbors needed their faith in order to recover from the traumatic effects of this event. Destabilized due to the loss of loved ones, they needed to secure their sense of belonging—and healing. In the words of Master Yen: “Your Church is the pillar in the city and should be restored soonest.”¹¹⁸ In this way, Brazal wants to suggest Tacloban's Buddhist community had recognized an interdependence with their neighbors, thereby enabling them to act out of this deeper awareness to improve the situation for the neighbors. As many might concur, she claims the Buddhist example is “interfaith solidarity at its best.”

But what distinguishes and transforms resilience, especially in light of hope, is not so much an abiding concern for structural and systemic injustice. As much as those aspects are needed, for the sake of building resilience specifically, the more precise concern is directed toward underlying conditions that affect relations, interdependence, and the ability for cooperation. Resilience is about how we inhabit relations, regard co-dependency, and support this human potential to associate and achieve common goods, especially in challenging circumstances. Becoming resilient, in other words, requires deeper awareness and responsiveness to conditions that would make us so prone toward suffering. What

¹¹⁸ Brazal, “Resilience,” 62, cf. fn47.

conditions radically impair our abilities to live flourishing lives? What conditions undermine our quality-of-life? More hopefully, as a Ghazalian perspective suggests, resilience consolidates the means and cultivates conditions to support common goods. In brief, material concerns of resilience are more elemental and holistic, and not structural, and its “cause” relational.

While the case of the Niger Delta provides a meaningful context for climate ethics to examine communal dimensions of resilience and the ways it could be cultivated, this specific case also summons another level of mutual recognition. “The human and nonhuman inhabitants of the Niger Delta bear,” Laura Hartman acknowledges, “to a significant extent, the cost of my and my community’s flourishing.”¹¹⁹ Reflecting not only as a Christian but also as an American, Hartman recognizes that the norms of flourishing she assumes must also become subject to questioning. Indeed, Nigerian Muslims and Christians may come to recognize in one another hope, if they recognize “environmental issues and care for creation constitute a potential point of connection.” For this reason, Laura Hartman justifies the crucial importance of this case, and yet the case also reflexively reveals another crucial correspondence.

For this case, a proposal called the “carbon budget” is relevant, providing one particularly political way to mediate some challenging issues. Basically, this concept measures the amount of carbon emissions that are permissible to stay below the 2° C pre-industrial level, to which all nations in the 2015 Paris Agreement pledged. By design, the

¹¹⁹ Laura M. Hartman, “Introduction,” in *That All May Flourish: Comparative Religious Environmental Ethics*, ed. Hartman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2–3. She cites the work of Muazu Usman Shehu, “Religion and the Environment in Northeast Nigeria: Dominion, Stewardship, Fatalism and Agency” (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2015). For context, from a Muslim perspective, Ibrahim Abdul-Matin cites the “postcolonial” consequences with multinational corporations effectively supplanting former colonial authorities, see *Green Deen*, 35–6.

carbon budget is also meant to strive toward limiting emissions to 1.5° C. In the case of Nigeria, according to this proposal, this idea would allow the viability for Nigerians to use natural resources, such as oil and other fossil fuels such as natural gas, for domestic purposes of sustainable development. If climate change most adversely affects poorer societies, the “carbon budget” permits a more just and strategic use. Building social resilience, in response to climate change, is a costly endeavor. Those regions that are disproportionately affected also are the ones that usually have fewer resources at their disposal. In a way, restoring sovereignty, Nigerians would be in a better position to address and even reverse historic patterns of extraction, exploitation, and injustice, if fossil fuels that originate in Nigeria were allocated toward building their corporate resilience.

For those of us in the United States, the Niger Delta summons the need to assess “ecological debt” in accounting for the “carbon budget.” In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis is unequivocal: “The developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy and by assisting poorer countries to support policies and programmes of sustainable development” (sec. 52). In an American context, therefore, the idea of “ecological debt” and its political relevance would look different in response. In the United States, in a longitudinal way, more resilient thinking would seek to enact specific steps that commit toward changing “economies” of desire. Fossil fuel dependence is the most obvious but not the only example. Reducing and limiting American consumption, relatedly, would enable Nigerians to be beneficiaries of the oil that is beneath the Delta. These specific actions also would allow inhabitants of the Niger Delta to be in a better position to build their own resilience, including the biodiversity in mangrove forests.

5.3.3. Benefits of Resilience: Climate Justice via Ecological Restoration

Finally, in closing, specific actions must be proposed. In light of hope, as “climate change witnesses” demonstrate, personal acts of resilience might set communal standards with respect to climate justice. For the sake of participating in more collective responses, their resilience is exhibited in the ways they respond to challenging obstacles. In moving toward climate justice, an integral part of building resilience should involve respecting the constitutive role of ecological well-being within personal and communal flourishing. As the case of the Niger Delta suggests, Catholic social teaching should both encourage “protection” of creation and examine concrete ways to seed resilience ecologically.

One avenue to build resilience, in this regard, is to align virtue ethics with the “ecological restoration” movement. The concept signifies “the process of assisting in the recovery of an ecosystem that has been damaged, degraded, or destroyed.”¹²⁰ Suffice it to say, the Niger Delta is a large-scale case. Started in the 1930s at the University of Wisconsin, efforts were initiated to restore sixty acres of the Curtis Prairie, a habitat that a century beforehand had scarcely existed. After the land was cultivated in the 19th century, and used as a horse pasture, the university acquired the property and began to experiment to “restore” the prairie. As first rediscovered in Wisconsin, elsewhere today, restorative practices seek to underscore that flourishing recognizes increasingly the constitutive role of preserving ecological integrity, in a manner that does not exclude human use or social benefits. More broadly, Andrew Light judges, ecological restoration refers to a “cluster of practices which could represent the best that we can do in an uncertain future.”¹²¹ In a word,

¹²⁰ See Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, “Introduction,” 12 and Andrew Light, “Death or Restoration?” 108 in Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*. See also Eric Higgs, *Nature by Design: People, Natural Processes, and Ecological Restoration* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), esp. 107–10. See also Andrew Light, “Ecological Restoration: From Functional Descriptions to Normative Prescriptions,” in *Functions in Biological and Artificial Worlds: Comparative Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Ulrich Krohs and Peter Kroes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 153.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

ecological restoration provides a definable praxis of hope, and develops a possible foundation for building resilience.

For climate ethics, practices of ecological restoration are considered reparative. Regarding the Niger Delta, restoring the habitat would involve specific actions that assist the recovery of habitat and repairing the biosphere of what has been damaged or degraded. As part of Wisconsin's restoration initiative in the 1930s, participants experimented with controlled burns that attempted to stimulate new growth of the prairie. In that specific context, these practical steps were intended to prevent succession by invasive, non-native trees and shrubs that had blocked and would choke out native prairie plants.¹²² For the Nigerian context, of course, specific actions to restore and repair ecological relations would look different. A few oil companies, such as Shell and Chevron, have adopted the lexicon of restoration ecology, without addressing recurrent oil spillage. Presently, there are no actions that indicate how it is possible for conditions of the Niger Delta to be "returned." In the Niger Delta, given degraded and worsening state of ecological conditions, ecological restoration would signal a more all-encompassing commitment toward building resilience. In 2011, after Shell admitted liability, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recommended that corporation fund the clean-up with an initial payment of \$1 billion. Estimates of the cost to thoroughly clean the oil spills in the Niger Delta range upwards of \$500 billion.¹²³

¹²² For a fuller description upon which this summary is based, see Andrew Light, "Death or Restoration?" in Thompson and Bendik-Keymer, *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change*, 105–22, esp. 110.

¹²³ See UNEP, "Ogoniland Report," 7 August 2017, available online at: <http://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/unep-team-nigeria-discuss-steps-needed-implement-ogoniland-report> (accessed 13 April 2021) and Chatham House, "Meeting Summary: Oil Spills in the Niger Delta," May 2010, available online at: <http://remembersarowiwa.com/uploads/Meeting-Summary-Oil-Spills-in-the-Niger-Delta.pdf> (accessed 13 April 2021), cf. Platform London, "Counting the Cost: Corporations and Human Rights Abuses in the Niger Delta" (London: Platform, 2011), 8.

From Ghazālī’s masterful portrait, it may be possible to glean the theological significance for hope. Drawing constantly on the agronomic image, Ghazālī privileges the role of creation. Thus, he gives attention to the basic reality that numerous factors are necessary for the farmer to justifiably have hope. Indeed, a proper sense of hope entails the farmer’s key part in cultivating and, of course, there are also plenty other elements, such as the seeds, land, and water. All of these “factors”—beyond her means to control—contribute to hope. The point, in sum, is more than simple observation of inherent complexity of hope; rather, the farmer’s practice attempts to find a harmonious mean and work more productively with these other elements. While a farmer must learn to be responsive, hope is attained through coordinating others in a balanced manner. As “gifts,” these elements of creation do not exist because of anything that the farmer has done. The land, similarly, is entrusted. Nonetheless, the purpose of Ghazālī’s farmers is to labor toward a more generative flourishing. The responsibility of the farmer, of course, is to provide food for the community regardless of the challenging conditions. The fruits that are to be reaped benefit others, not the farmer primarily. Meanwhile, continually, the well-being of the land as part of the community is also to be honored and respected. Moreover, likely, a farmer learns to evaluate how best to pass on this inheritance to the next generation, that is, both the land and the inherent. This image might be useful for the hope-filled resilience that must be cultivated in response to the Niger Delta case.

Finally, in the struggle for climate justice, virtue responses need “living faith” that further demonstrate acts of living hope. Out of suffering and historical realities that lay the conditions for this crisis, climate change witnesses provide vital insights that cannot be explained in any way other than by way of hope. Another source of resilience that we may

not expect is the mangrove tree itself. A remarkably resilient species, its roots grow in the swampy conditions where the ocean's saline waters and the delta's river ways converge. It is a place that is not hospitable for most other plants, but this is what it makes the mangrove tree this habitat's "keystone" species. This is not the same as hope has been understood, and yet from a theological perspective we might find something uncannily familiar. In resistance to despair, overcoming immature hopes, we might re-learn the grammar of hope. Most importantly, this hope draws us into becoming the types of people we are called to become, those whose hope is a source of hope for others.

Conclusion

Who are we? Who should we become? How do we get there? Attempting to draw upon hope, this comparative theological inquiry seeks to better understand how to build resilience more socially. It reframes the meaning of resilience according to the horizon of hope. This chapter also sets its inquiry within the field of climate ethics, critiquing these models for what they contribute and how they might falter. Subsequently, between fear and hope, it frames the task of building resilience in ways offering a special challenge for Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Prophetic Pragmatism, Comparative Theology, and Reinhabitation: An Afterword

Reinhabitation underscores ways that debates and deliberation about climate change can be reconfigured in terms that traditions of virtue ethics enable. As a collective goal, reinhabitation serves a justice-oriented purpose as it refuses to exclude others, while promoting hospitality and a fair share in the common good. In each chapter, I have offered detailed exercises that aim to demonstrate the usefulness of virtue ethics offers, especially its wider appeal that invites, facilitates, and enables fuller moral engagement with the concrete challenges of climate change. According to a comparative theological approach, the resulting perspective organizes and seeks to further establish fruitful lines of dialogical approach and potential avenues for collaboration. For the sake of the common good, as an ongoing dialogical challenge, the shared task of reinhabitation requires us to examine more carefully both how practices shape habits, and how we participate in the ecological communities, traditions, and world we inhabit. In conclusion, this methodological reflection offers several points that seek to underscore the possible insights that specifically the discipline of comparative theology can provide in the service of climate ethics, particularly advancing ethical reflection and the possibility of meaningful cooperative actions.

In response to climate change, the ethical strategy of prophetic pragmatism not only encourages the exemplary lessons of “reform projects,” but, as Willis Jenkins argues, also helps supply a method of moral reasoning that generates new possibilities of moral agency. Given the planetary scale, uniquely local manifestations, indeterminate goals, contestable assessments, and constantly changing conditions, by engaging moral uncertainties, Jenkins

strives to account for these “wicked” effects that regularly destabilize deliberation and adaptive efforts. Given reform projects who exemplify more competent demonstration of managing human power, Jenkins argues moral uncertainty is key. In a sense, comparable with the discipline of comparative theology, his basic method provides the prerequisite attentiveness toward concrete particularities. His basic dependence on reform projects brings focus toward actual cases of cultural change. This basis enhances the ability of practical reason to develop considered judgments of concrete circumstances. Thus, in a disciplined but experimental manner akin to the disciple of comparative theology, the pragmatic bent of his ethical strategy attempts to concentrate on particular “cases,” and to avoid sweeping generalizations about climate change.¹ These rather ordinary examples provide crucial lessons for the kinds of “ecological conversion” that typically elude the climate discourse.

As a matter of practical reason, therefore, the lessons that this strategy allows serve a crucial purpose in approaching climate justice in terms of reinhabitation, cultivating virtue and reasoning about the common good. Alone, however, the strategy of prophetic pragmatism is not sufficient. In chapter 1, I critiqued a systematic dependency, having claimed that the ethical strategy of prophetic pragmatism needed some form of comparative theology. Given formal similarities between these two disciplined approaches, in a complementary manner, a comparative theological approach actively strives to resist generalizations about religious others and focus instead on interlocutors. In this way, according to a comparative theological approach, it is possible to recognize, receive, and respond to interlocutors, virtue accounts, and non-Christian reform projects that a more

¹ Hugh Nicholson, “The Reunification of Comparison and Theology in the New Comparative Theology,” *JAAR* 77, no. 3 (2009): 609–46, esp. 619.

inclusive and dialogical line of approach would require. From a virtue standpoint, moreover, it is also possible to name the habitual dispositions that hinder virtue responses from confronting concrete problems and ethical challenges. In the service of climate ethics, furthermore, the discipline could organize greater dialogical engagement wherein religious others are recognized, and their meaningful participation actively invited. In *Faith among Faiths*, comparative theologian James Fredericks once wrote that the kind of dialogical engagement that the discipline provides could allow Christians to “develop skills for living responsibly and creatively with non-Christian believers.”² For the sake of the common good, the resulting perspective allows us to appreciate the importance of prudential judgment and the abilities to identify and affirm “goods” that are shared. Promoting justice in this light, virtue ethics proposes that you can reason with others about questions of the good life and even how possibly to thrive and the necessary actions that would allow others to flourish in the face of climate change.

How ought ethical strategies deal directly with the challenge of religious diversity? For Jenkins, further deepening the challenge, climate justice requires fostering commitments “in conditions of moral pluralism and cultural conflict.” On the one hand, as Jenkins supposes, it seems necessary to recognize that increasingly global problems signal how we must address matters of justice as “one world” (Peter Singer); on the other hand, practical challenges remind us that in fact we inhabit “many moral worlds” (William Schweiker). In *The Future of Ethics*, Jenkins commits Christian religious ethics to “playing

² James L. Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 162. His later writings develop these practical implications in virtue terms of solidarity and friendship: *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2014), and “Introduction,” in *Interreligious Friendship after Nostra Aetate*, eds. James L. Fredericks and Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, 1–8 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

host.” In the interest of climate justice, as both critical participant and host for a pluralist, interdisciplinary inquiry, the task of theological ethics is to “help generate new possibilities of moral agency.”³ As he explains, his pragmatic strategy is “methodologically pluralist,” as theological ethics attempts to host “many disciplines by serving as the running example of a tradition under strain.”⁴ From a methodological standpoint, Jenkins recognizes the presence of religious others, but his strategy never engages them, invites their participation, nor properly accredits lessons learned.⁵ In response to climate change, on a basis of prophetic pragmatism, Willis Jenkins claims his ethical strategy aimed to be hospitable, since, as he states: “[M]y particularist and pluralist approach intentionally opens space for constructive argument in many other religious scenes.” As such, his stated intention is that the strategy he forged could be a model for others in order to show the “wider freedom one has,” and as it “invites participants in other moral traditions to undertake similar work.”⁶ In conclusion, regarding other religious traditions, he remarks that “their future depends on how their members generate new competencies of responsibility in the practices that sustain the tradition’s meaning.”⁷ From his viewpoint, a specific aim is to demonstrate Christian freedom and religious creativity, and, by way of teaching, suggest to religious others how they should do likewise.

³ Willis Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 3-4, 14 n7, cf. Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), and William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁵ E.g., Jenkins attributes some influence to Islamic jurisprudence as a “schooling in the logic of authoritative reform,” *Future of Ethics*, 21, 59 n3, cf. Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Jenkins, “Islamic Law and Environmental Ethics: How Jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*) Mobilizes Practical Reform,” *Worldviews* 9, no. 3 (2005): 338–64. From a comparative theological standpoint, it must be noted that Hallaq, as a Palestinian Christian, is a non-Muslim specialist in the intellectual history of Islamic jurisprudence.

⁶ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 6–7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 323.

But this is not the only way nor probably the best way to engage this deeper challenge concerning “conditions of moral pluralism and cultural conflict.” From the comparative theological standpoint, the resulting perspective alters how we understand the challenge of climate justice in terms of cooperation. For climate ethics, the discipline of comparative theology provides a different conception of hospitality and particular respect for the virtue responses of religious others, who also are attempting to figure out how to cultivate virtues and to promote common goods. Greater dialogical engagement, in contrast, is considered both necessary and possibly beneficial. Whereas Jenkins’s gesture of inclusion can be regarded as a sign of respect for existing religious differences, a comparative theological approach seeks to distinctively practice hospitality. Comparative theological hospitality gathers multiple perspectives and organizes adaptive efforts to deliberate in the pursuit of ecological conversion more inclusively. From a Catholic viewpoint, as Pope Francis demonstrates, the focus of this dialogical engagement is toward shared judgments, practical means, and goods that desired in common. In this way, although comparative theology has not yet emphasized public responsibility nor civic goods, the discipline can approach justice in terms of cultivating virtues and reasoning about the common good.

For climate ethics, on the case-based method that prophetic pragmatism provides, a distinct method of moral reasoning is allowed to emerge. For Jenkins, the most accurate starting point is one of “moral incompetence.” He is thus claiming that no person, moral tradition, ethical theory, institution of justice, or even religious community sufficiently solves the problems that anthropogenic climate change produces. Whereas Jenkins judges that moral incompetence is the greater equalizer in the face of climate change, a virtue-

rooted approach ought to target those habitual reactions and problematic predispositions that tend to impair responses to climate change, including attitudes about religious diversity and the public role of religion. In contrast with Jenkins's strategy, from common ground, virtue ethics can depart from communities and institutions who are attempting to discern how to adapt in a more equitable and just way. To be clear, exemplary movements do not embody the ultimate ends of the good life, rather they serve as ordinary examples providing lessons for the kinds of "ecological conversion" that elude the typical climate discourse.

If we recall and reflect upon the comparative theological exercises in this dissertation, we may appreciate specifically the way that those arguments proceeded. In response to climate change, virtue ethics provides limited exercises, moving back and forth between prudential judgments of concrete particularities, whether actual event, specific cases, and particular reform projects, and considering judgments about questions of the good life, particular virtuous habits, communal narratives, and significant figures of virtue. For climate ethics, surveying the "virtue turn," Jenkins himself has observed the benefits of "'dialectical activities'—practices that allow a person to continuously deepen his or her understanding of the goods of a practice and revise one's understanding of their place within an overall vision of a good life."⁸ Moreover, this dialogical manner of moral reasoning also practices hospitality insofar as it receives and gives response to Muslim insights about methods of virtue cultivation and judgments about flourishing. Between reasonable judgments about concrete particularities and more general virtues that help us rearticulate the types of persons we should become, virtue responses should go further.

⁸ Jenkins, "Turn to Virtue," 92, cf. Tal Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49.

What are the standards of justice by which shared actions and ecological conversion will be measured?

By way of dialogue, moreover, Jenkins's strategy of prophetic pragmatism also incorporates a key tension into his quest to construct a global ethic. In comparative perspective, then, how should the purpose of dialogue come into play? In this respect, we should account for another enduring lesson that Jenkins's strategy of prophetic pragmatism lends the practice of comparative theology. For Jenkins, this reality that climate change reveals ought to be scandalous for Christians, challenging how practices of "neighbor-love" ought to be understood. Regarding climate ethics, more specifically, the ever-widening radical inequality continues to loom larger than ever as a moral and political issue. Arguably, the growing gap between the privileged and the poor undermines the solidarity that Christian identity assumes. In response to climate change, it is possible that the affluent might find new ways to continue thriving, while the poor experience ever greater obstacles in their struggle to survive. To the extent Jenkins facilitates dialogue, intercultural in focus, he proposes that if religious communities "resist claims from outside its borders, ethicists must work to help agents recognize their membership in planetary relations made by climate change."⁹ Between the poor and privileged, the victims and enablers of this peculiar structural violence, he seeks to identify exemplary "cross-border networks of agents responding to problems."¹⁰ Thus, he guides theologians, ethicists and "pluralist exchanges" toward understanding the lives of the poor, and intentionally disrupt

⁹ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 39.

¹⁰ Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 111–42 cited at 113, 115, and idem, "Global Ethics, Christian Theology, and the Challenge of Sustainability," 197–217, cf. Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Toward Global Ethics," *TS* 63 (2002): 324–44, and idem, "Globalization and the Common Good," in *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought*, eds. John A. Coleman and William F. Ryan, 42–54 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

this “alienated” state of relations. However, in this way, aiming to address cultural conflicts and to generate new possibilities of moral agency, his strategy remains generally silent on those troubling questions with which we are left concerning the faith-based boundaries and religious differences.

Ultimately, in other words, is it possible to reason about justice? From a Catholic viewpoint, addressing the issue of climate change, I wager that, indeed, it is possible. In response to climate change, moreover, these challenging dialogues are both necessary and potentially beneficial. This is a pivotal difference between the strategy of prophetic pragmatism and the resulting perspective of this comparative theological approach. For the sake of the common good, by calling together Christians and Muslims, virtue-rooted approaches will provide a more promising basis to motivate, support, and possibly cultivate virtue responses. By introducing the aspirational concept of reinhabitation, I also understand that the initial task requires recognizing and being accountable for the latent interconnections, material relations, and virtue traditions that already exist. In the service of climate ethics, virtue-rooted approaches help highlight and focus the challenge of reinhabitation fundamentally as questions of conscience. In this vein, the politics of the common good is not simply more inspiring than a strategy of avoidance. Between Christians and Muslims, the more inclusive approach that comparative theology can provide between Christians and Muslims also serves a cooperative purpose that aims to develop the basic conditions for building the solidarity and practicing the hospitality that will be necessary to reconcile human flourishing and rectify terrestrial habits.

Appendix: Transliterations and Translations

The Arabic terms and names are transliterated according to the standard method and style of the *Encyclopedia of Islam: New Edition*—unless there were obstacles due to font. The Arabic letter *jīm* appears as “j,” as opposed to “dj,” and the letter *qāf* is translated as “q” as opposed to “k.” The *tā marbūta* is rendered as “ah” (ex. *khalifah*), except when it is part of a -constructed state (e.g., *khalifat Allāh fi’l-‘ard*). The transliteration of Qur’ān is preferred to “Koran.” Technical terms in Arabic are italicized unless they are words that are common in the English language, including *sunna*, *hadith*, and *hajj*. In addition, whenever Islamic figures are mentioned on the first occasion, double dates are used in reference to the Roman calendar (AD) and the Islamic calendar (AH) so that Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī (b. d.505_{AH}/1111_{CE}). For Thomas Aquinas, using the Roman calendar, a single date refers to the year of his death. This practice, however, is not used for contemporary figures and scholars from either tradition. Latin terms will occasionally be used in parentheses, especially regarding particular virtues to follow more closely with Arabic cognates and analogous terms.

We are fortunate that many of these texts are translated and based on standard critical editions. For me, at the outset, an exception was Ghazālī’s *Mīzān al-‘amal*, which to the best of my understanding does not have an English translation that is based on a critical edition of the original text. I used the standard Arabic edition and the 1945 French translation, *Critère de l’action*. Later, at Harvard’s Widener Library, I found Avak Vazken Asadourian, *The Moral Quest of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali as Delineated in Criterion of Action (Mizan al-amal)* (Beirut: Pontificia Universitas Sanctae Crucis, 2017), which is based on the author’s dissertation. After evaluating this text, however, I still favored the French edition as an aid for interpreting the original Arabic.

Abbreviations

CTSA	<i>Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings</i>
DQV	<i>Disputed Questions on Virtues</i>
IDGCC	“Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change”
Ihyā’	Ghazālī, <i>Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JRE	<i>The Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
Ls’	<i>Laudato si’</i>
ST	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
MA	Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, <i>Mīzān al-‘amal</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>

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