

Climate Debt, Climate Justice: A Crucifixion, Resurrection, Incarnation Perspective¹

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“Please ladies and gentlemen, we did not do any of these things [lead high carbon-emission lifestyles], but if business goes on as usual, we will not live. We will die. Our country will not exist.”

Mohammed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives²

“Human beings cannot bear much reality.”

T.S. Eliot in *Burnt Norton*

“[T]he theologian is one who is chivvied by the Holy Spirit into making available in words dimensions of a revealed vision by which God’s people may live.” This is done...by the constant work of rediscovery of the newness and freshness of the Gospel as we, compelled and repelled within the community of faith, try to live it out.

James Alison, *Crossroad*, 1998

Climate change: an oddly inadequate term to express what may be the most far-reaching moral catastrophe in the history of this young and dangerous -- yet precious and beloved -- species called human. Climate change: a strangely neutral name for what could be our most deadly error. Climate crisis rings more real.

The moral quality of humankind’s response to the climate crisis will shape the fate of life on Earth. That unprecedented challenge, however, is not the primary concern of this essay. I am concerned herein with a less widely recognized moral issue at stake in our response to the exploding climate crisis. It is the question of who has caused it in relationship to who suffers most from it. This haunting question is a foremost moral issue of the 21st century.

The moral problem has two layers. First, the people most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change are – in general – not those most responsible for it. The problem thickens: Climate privileged societies and sectors may respond to climate change with policies and practices that enable them to survive with some degree of well-being under the limited conditions imposed by the planet’s warming, while relegating others – the most “climate vulnerable” -- to death or living death as a result of those conditions.³

The race and class dimensions of both layers are stark. Caused overwhelmingly by the world’s high-consuming people, climate change is wreaking death and destruction first and foremost on impoverished people who also are disproportionately people of color. The island nations that will be rendered unsuitable for human habitation by rising sea levels, subsistence farmers whose crops are undermined by climate change, and coastal peoples without resources to protect against and recover from the fury of climate related weather disaster are not the people largely responsible for greenhouse gas emissions.⁴ Nor are they, for the most part, white.⁵

Many voices of the Global South recognize this as climate debt or climate colonialism and situate it as a continuation of the colonialism that enabled the Global North to enrich itself for five centuries at the expense of Africa, Latin America, Indigenous North America, and parts of Asia.⁶ Climate debt theory posits that the costs of adapting to climate change and of mitigating it are the responsibility of the countries that created the crisis, the industrialized world.⁷ Said differently, “The polluter pays.”⁸

Within the U.S. too, economically marginalized people – who are also disproportionately people of color -- are most vulnerable to on-going extreme suffering from the fierce storms, respiratory illness and other disease, food insecurity, and drought brought on by climate change. Environmental racism and white privilege strike again in climate change. This is not to suggest that some people are exempt from climate change impacts, but rather that some are vastly more vulnerable than others.

The dilemma and its legal and governance dimension is expressed in ethical terms by law professor, Maxine Burkett, who writes: Those who “suffer most acutely [from climate change] are also those who are least responsible for the crisis to date. That irony introduces a great ethical dilemma, one that our systems of law and governance are ill-equipped to accommodate. Indeed attempts to right this imbalance between fault and consequence have resulted in a cacophony of political negotiation and legal action between and amongst various political scales that have yielded insufficient remedies.”⁹

Elsewhere, drawing upon structural violence theory, I propose “climate violence” as a concept to describe climate injustice and expose the structural factors at work in perpetuating it.¹⁰ Here I use climate violence and climate injustice interchangeably.

In theological terms, just as structural sin refers to structural injustice, climate sin identifies climate injustice as a theological category. Climate injustice is “sin” not only because it transgresses God’s call to love neighbor as self, but also because it defies the earliest vocation that God gave to the human creature – to “serve and preserve” (*shamar* and *abad*) God’s garden (Genesis 2:15). Climate change is sin in yet another sense. Christians and Jews both hold that God created this Earth and then “saw that it was good,” *tov* in the Hebrew (Genesis 1). *Tov*, while commonly translated as “good,” also implies “life-furthering.” And God said time and again that this creation was *tov* -- a good that is life-furthering. Thus the founding act of God -- creating -- is not merely to create a magnificent world. God creates a magnificently *life-furthering* world. The scandalous point is this. We are *undoing* that very “*tov*,” Earth’s life-generating capacity. We are “uncreating.” We – or rather, some of us -- have become the “uncreators.”

Where will we find moral agency to resist ways of life that generate climate change and rebuild alternative lifeways that serve social justice and Earth’s well-being? This essay raises that question and then pursues it by identifying obstacles to moral agency and identifying resources within Christian traditions for overcoming one of them.

Two methodological clarifications are in order. The first pertains to my use of the first person plural in this essay. “Our,” “we,” and “us” are dangerous words. They require clarification. This

essay grapples with the moral dilemma of a particular people of whom I am one. I speak of this people as “we,” referring to the set of United States citizens who are economically privileged,¹¹ and therefore are among the world’s climate privileged societies and sectors. At times I speak even more specifically to and about those of us who are white. The boundaries of economic privilege – and therefore the boundaries of “we” in this paper – admittedly are not always clear. Many U.S. citizens are economically privileged while also being exploited through inadequate wages, non-existent or sparse benefits, poor working conditions, wage theft, regressive taxation, exorbitant health care costs, and more. As a result, many live in poverty that renders them climate vulnerable, or they maintain a constant struggle to avoid it. These people are not the “we” of whom I speak, although much of what I say herein may pertain to them.

Secondly, the reader will move from a voice of social analysis, used in Parts One and Two to describe an aspect of the climate crisis, to a particular kind of theological voice aimed at unfolding a response to that crisis in Parts Three and Four. Moving between these languages – and putting them in dialogue – inheres in the work of Christian ethics, my disciplinary lens. Presently, I address conundrums at play when theology speaks to and in a pluralistic public arena.

PART ONE: The Challenge of Moral Agency

In this condition of climate injustice -- perhaps humankind’s greatest moral challenge -- one thing is sure. Our great enemy is the moral inertia of climate privileged people; it is the compelling urge to resist change. The great task before us is to unearth and claim moral agency to reverse the magnetic pull of our death-dealing and fossil-fuel addictive way of life that parade as natural, normal, inevitable, and even divinely ordained. By moral agency I mean the capacity to move from “the way things are” to “the way that things ought to be.”

What will enable that moral agency? What will generate the moral agency for a dramatic and rapid reversal, a turn to ways of ways of living that Earth can sustain and that breed economic and environmental equity? This is the crucial question facing climate privileged sectors and societies at this moment in history.

Response requires posing a prior question: What is behind the moral inertia? What could possibly explain our willingness to carry on with ways of living that are destroying Earth’s life systems? Why do we persist in this deadly nonsense?

Probing the question of moral inertia reveals two landscapes: A landscape of denial or moral oblivion that bears many hiding places, and a landscape of despair. That is, one component of moral inertia is moral oblivion – not seeing and not admitting. And a second is hopelessness or despair. Both breed powerlessness. The great irony is that daring to exit the landscape of denial may catapult one quickly into the latter, a sense of hopelessness. Said differently, by seeing clearly, one invites despair.

Given these two landscapes, moral agency for radical change toward Earth-sustaining ways of life requires:¹²

- 1) seeing what we are doing, recognizing the magnitude of the disaster in the making in order to take moral responsibility for it, in particular demystifying what is hidden from view by the blinders of privilege.¹³ (What we see and do not see, and how we see bear tremendous moral weight. Perception is political. It may be matter of life and death.)
- 2) igniting and sustaining hope for radical change toward a more socially just and ecologically sustainable future.

We need, then, an ethics for climate justice that is capable of naming reality for what it is and – in spite of that -- instilling hope. I cannot overstate the crucial nature of both. The two must be held together because the former (seeing climate change clearly) is a fast and sure way to disable the latter (hope). This is a charge to ethics and to all people of good will at this point in human history. The survival of civilization in a relatively humane form may depend upon it.

Our question unlocking moral agency has become more focused: What enables seeing the reality of “what we are doing” while also sowing hope? To that question we turn in this paper’s Part Three. This question, too, requires a prior query. Why on earth do we fail to see? For a people with astounding access to information, what gets in the way of our acknowledging the extent of the disaster at hand and our implication in it? That question is the focus of Part Two.

PART TWO: The Blinders of Climate Privilege¹⁴

Only by noting why we fail to “see” can we transform that oblivion into courageous moral vision. In previous work I have dissected moral oblivion, naming eight ingredients of it, and possible paths to overcoming them.¹⁵ Here we note six other barriers to seeing what it is that we are doing as we carry on with public policies, corporate and institutional practices, and lifestyles that spew deadly amounts of greenhouse gasses into the air. I refer to these barriers as “blinders of climate privilege.”

- For those of us who are white, whiteness feeds moral oblivion regarding climate change and its consequences. The links are many. As David Gushee notes, white privilege can lead white people to assume subconsciously that things will work out for us. Many structures of Euro-Western society for at least five centuries have been set up to benefit white people while endangering others (e.g. the criminal “injustice” system, housing codes, hiring and firing norms, etc.). Enculturation from birth by white supremacy provides a second link between whiteness and climate oblivion. White people are shaped by a deeply engrained but utterly denied societal presupposition that white lives matter more than other lives. And the lives of moneyed people matter more than the lives of economically destitute people. North American and European societies would respond far differently to climate disaster if we were experiencing that disaster as it is now experienced by Africans bearing the drought or the Maldives preparing to be submerged by rising seas. Privileged white folks in the US would respond differently to the fossil fuel orgy if we were living in the horrors of Shell Oil in the Niger Delta or Cancer Alley in the United States. We would not deem a 1.9 degree climate increase bad but

acceptable if it would have the impact on us that it will have on sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and South Asia --death by starvation and water shortage.¹⁶

- Seeing would mandate radical changes in how we live, changes that bear economic cost. "...confronting climate change requires swearing off something that has been an extraordinary boon to humankind: cheap energy from fossil fuels."¹⁷
- A privatized sense of morality obscures the moral dimension of our roles in social systems, and obscures the importance of engagement in social movements. All too easily we assume that being moral in interpersonal relationships and in individual or household lifestyles is adequate for moral being. That is, if I treat others with care, recycle, drive a hybrid or ride a bike, and take other steps to reduce my carbon footprint, I am morally good. Yet this does nothing to acknowledge that I continue as a player in economic systems that exploit Earth and others to assure my on-going mode of living.¹⁸
- The moral dimensions of climate change are monumentally complex. For example, the harm has been done over centuries and generations, by people unaware of it, and by people who may be both victims and perpetrators of the harm done. Some of the harm is done through participation in systems from which many people arguably cannot disentangle themselves without doing immediate harm to self or dependents. The harm is difficult to quantify.
- We don't have a picture of the good that we need. It is not clear what it means to be a moral person, or to lead a good life in the context of climate debt. The current human population living sustainably on the planet with relative environmental equity between and within societies is an unprecedented state of being involving changes not yet conceptualized?¹⁹
- We flee from the shame, guilt, and sense of impotence that seeing would evoke. The consequences of climate change as experienced by millions of people today are dire, and projected consequences -- unless emissions are reduced much more rapidly than called for by current climate negotiations -- are catastrophic, unthinkable. Moreover, the warming that has been set in motion cannot be undone. The reality that our way of life is destroying Earth's capacity to sustain life is too terrible to face; we flee into the comfort of ignoring, pretending that life can go on as it is. We cannot bear for long the idea that we have generated so much horrific suffering and death, that we are undoing Earth's life generating capacities. We cannot bear to see ourselves as so "bad." For some, the specter of unredeemability haunts. Will we face ultimate judgement by God or by karma or the universe for having so cravenly destroyed so much?²⁰ A sense of powerlessness joins shame and guilt when we dare to acknowledge the power of the fossil fuel industry to influence public policy, and the extent to which every action of daily life depends in some way upon petroleum.

These then are some of the attitudinal and perspectival reasons that we fail to see climate violence clearly.²¹ The limitations of a brief essay preclude addressing all of these barriers. Thus, we turn now to address only one of them, the last in this list. Naming them all, despite not being

able herein to address them herein, signals the urgency of recognizing these ingredients of moral oblivion so that subsequent work may chart the course of overcoming them.

PART THREE:

A Resource in Christian Traditions for Moral Agency: Subversive Liberative Perspective

What would disarm the power of shame, guilt, and powerlessness to immobilize us? What would enable facing the reality of “what we are doing” while also sowing moral agency and hope? To where shall we turn to for the crucial power to hold together fierce honesty about the destruction that our lives cause and fierce hope about our power for good?

Perhaps this is the responsibility of the world’s religious traditions. Religion at its best has long been a wellspring of hope and moral power for overcome seemingly insurmountable odds and for acknowledging both the evil and the good that seem to inhere in the human condition. Precisely here in the crucible of good and evil, the paradox of bondage to sin and freedom from it, religions are called to search their depths for potent seeds of hope and moral power for the work of ecological healing. All fields of human knowledge are called upon today to bring their resources to the great pan-human task of forging sustainable Earth–human relations marked by justice. Religion is one of those fields. If the people faithful to particular religious traditions do not uncover and draw upon the resources offered by their tradition, then those life-saving and life-sustaining resources remain dormant. Tremendous gifts of power for life and for the good go untapped.

In this paper, the religion considered is Christianity. Before moving on, a word is in order about the use of theological discourse to address public moral matters. Forms of theological discourse are many. The one used here is to interpret central Christian symbols (crucifixion, resurrection, and incarnation), suggesting that this interpretation holds morally empowering “truth.” Four presuppositions regarding my use of religious truth claims undergird this move. Firstly, while my interpretation of Christian symbols and story is solidly grounded in biblical and theological scholarship, it is not the only valid interpretation. Valid interpretation of crucifixion, resurrection, and incarnation are multiple and have been since the earliest days following Jesus’ death. The multiplicity of valid interpretations does not make any solid interpretation less valid any more than the differences between the four biblical accounts of Jesus life are less valid because they differ. This is, in part, because Christianity has been, since the outset, a contextually based movement; the God revealed in Jesus “speaks” differently to people in different situations. Secondly, my noting the power of Christian claims to serve the common good presuppose that other religious traditions also have that power; I make no claim that Christianity holds moral wisdom superior to that of other religious or spiritual traditions.²² Thirdly, I presuppose that spiritual and moral wisdom within religious traditions can benefit and enlighten people who do not identify with that tradition or share its belief systems. That is, I hold that religions exist not only for the benefit of their adherents but also for the benefit of the world. Finally, I hold that the wisdom of each religious tradition is not adequate in its own and requires the supplemental insights of other religions. These four presuppositions are crucial to what follows in Parts Three and Four, and I ask the reader to bear them in mind.

Christian traditions bring many profound resources to the work of climate justice. They span liturgical resources, hermeneutical approaches, theological claims, institutional networks, historical guides, value systems and moral norms, spiritual practices, and more. The resource examined here is what I call “liberative, subversive perception.” It is a way of seeing the world and all of reality through a triple lens. Better said, it is a way of perceiving through three lenses at one time. They are:

- a crucifixion perspective,
- a resurrection perspective, and
- an incarnation perspective.

Christian faith offers to the work of dismantling the ecological and economic violence of climate change this threefold perception. What does this claim mean?

A Crucifixion Lens

A “crucifixion perspective” dares to acknowledge the magnitude of our participation in systemic sin, in this case climate sin. This means not only acknowledging the catastrophic consequences of climate change, the magnitude of the forces lined up to maintain it, and our implication as U.S. citizens in this disaster, but also admitting what the North American public most avoids. That is the inverse relationship between who causes climate change and who suffers most from it. This is the core of the moral travesty. Yet, it is precisely what the dominant gaze of climate privilege obscures.

Climate debt and climate colonialism are terms coming from the Global South to describe the imbalance between nations and communities likely to suffer first and worst from climate change and those contributing most to it.²³ Why look at climate change in these terms? Why recognize this horror, why enter this abyss? Why, for godsake, not try as best we can to ignore it and focus on being as green as we can manage to be? Consider three reasons why this perspective is crucial.

First, what constitutes the morally right response to a moral dilemma depends upon what the problem is understood to be. Inadequate analysis leads to inadequate diagnosis and remedies. To illustrate: when asked in the mid-1940s about the “Negro problem” in America, James Baldwin responded: “There isn’t any Negro problem; there is only a white problem.” The history of white racism in the United States in housing, health care, law, education, exposure to toxic land use, and more would have been dramatically different had we recognized and addressed race as a “white problem” rather than as a black problem.

Response to the perilous reality of climate change frequently is framed around the principle of sustainability. Climate change as a matter of sustainability calls for reducing carbon emission through technological advances, energy efficiency, and energy conservation, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. The moves are crucial, to be applauded and supported. If climate change were not connected, historically and contemporarily, to the power imbalances that have rendered climate debt, then this response – together with assistance to the victims of climate change -- would be ethically adequate. It is, however, an inadequate and deceptive moral response for affluent societies and sectors if we: 1) are disproportionately responsible for climate

change, 2) could choose sustainability measures that have adverse impact on impoverished people and peoples, 3) are material beneficiaries of the fossil-fuel economies that generated the climate crisis, and 4) have produced economic orders that impoverished vulnerable peoples, thus rendering them less able to survive climate change-related disaster. A response organized around sustainability alone allows the world's high consuming societies and people to address climate change in ways that do not take moral responsibility for these factors and for the disproportionate impact that climate change has on people of color and economically impoverished people.

If climate change—on the other hand—is seen also as a problem of climate debt, damage done by one group to another, or human rights abused, then more is required in response. Debt owed by the wealthy to the impoverished calls for compensation. Damage done or rights abused may call for reparations. If climate change is seen also as a matter of race and class-based climate privilege, then a moral response includes acknowledging and challenging that privilege.

The second reason for seeing climate change as climate debt is theological. It pertains to repentance. Christians profess that freedom from sin begins with repentance. Where we do not repent, we remain in bondage to sin. Repentance, however, is possible only where sin is acknowledged. Climate violence is a powerful form of structural sin. If we do not see it, we cannot repent of it.²⁴ Failing to repent, we remain captive to it.

The third reason, also theological in nature, is the transformative potential of lament. In a powerful sermon on the book of Joel, Christian womanist ethicist Emilie Townes claims that social healing begins with communal lament. Communal lament, she explains, is the assembly crying out in distress to the God in whom it trusts. It is a cry of sorrow by the people gathered, a cry of grief and repentance and a plea for help in the midst of social affliction. Deep and sincere “communal lament . . . names problems, seeks justice, and hopes for God’s deliverance.” “[W]hen Israel used lament as rite and worship on a regular basis, it kept the question of justice visible and legitimate.”²⁵ Perhaps for us too, lament is integral to social restoration. Lament, like repentance, is not possible if we fail to see that for which we are called to lament.

If repentance and lament are doorways to social healing, and if they depend upon seeing the wrong that is done, then climate privileged sectors and societies must open eyes to the reality of climate debt and the catastrophic devastation and suffering that it will continue increasingly to spawn. The floodgates to guilt, shame, despair, and powerlessness fly open. How could we face unbearable truth?

Perhaps the Christian “story” offers power for that daring and seemingly damning vision, precisely because of the crucifixion linked to the resurrection. On the one hand, Jesus’ execution by imperial Rome as a threat to its hegemony forewarns us -- the forces of brutality, empire, and self-serving power will go to all ends to maintain their interests, and seemingly innocent bystanders are complicit. Yet the Christian story holds the crucifixion inseparably linked to forgiveness and resurrection. God’s grace -- including both forgiveness and life arising from death -- surpasses even the most heinous sin. We can see and confess the horror of climate sin because we trust that we do not stand condemned for it, and because we know it is not the end of the story. The end of the story is resurrection. To that second lens we now turn. But first a

note is crucial. The promise of forgiveness and resurrection is *not* a ticket to continue in the ways of sin. To the contrary, trusting in these promises is a pathway to renouncing and resisting sin.

A Resurrection Lens

What does the resurrection mean in the age of climate violence? I speak now very personally. I am easily tempted toward despair when I acknowledge the insidious nature of structural injustice and the projected consequences of climate change. A subtle but deep voice within me whispers that things will continue as they are despite our best efforts. However, the resurrection defies that voice and promises otherwise.

This I believe with my whole being. In my late teenage years, I became filled with despair about structural injustice. Finding myself lost in hopelessness, I sought out a person whom I knew was deeply aware of the injustice that permeates our lives and yet who maintained a contagious and enduring sense of hope and joy. After spilling my pain to him, I asked him how it was that he could face those searing realities without giving up hope. “Cindy,” he responded gently, “I know the end of the story.” He meant that God’s love for this world is more powerful than all forms of death and destruction, and ultimately will prevail. Said differently, the power of God liberating all of creation from the bonds of oppression, destruction, and death is stronger than all forces of evil that would undermine God’s promise that all shall have life and have it abundantly. In the words of Douglas John Hall, God “will not allow our complicity in...evil to defeat God’s being for us and for the good of all creation.”²⁶ Soul-searing, life-shattering destruction and death is not the last word, in this moment or forever. In some way that we do not grasp, the last word is life raised up out of brutal death. In the midst of suffering and death—be it individual, social, or ecological—the promise given to the Earth community is that life in God will reign. So speaks the resurrection.

In all honesty, I do not know what this promise means for us and for Earth’s community of life. *It does not lessen our call to devote our lives to building a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world; it does not, that is, allow us to sit back and let God do the work.* That conclusion would be absurd because, as biblical faith has insisted for millennia, God works through human beings and other parts of creation. Nor does trust in resurrection ensure our survival as a species in the face of climate change. *It does* ensure that the radiant Good beyond comprehension that is above, beyond, under, and within all, ultimately will bring all to the fullness of love and life. Resurrection from death-dealing ways of life is not only a possibility but a promise. We are to live trusting in that promise. In Martin Luther’s imagery, if the world is to end tomorrow, one ought to plant an apple tree.

In the age of climate violence, a resurrection perspective means hope. Resurrection, however, is also not the end of the story. What it means to live the resurrection is defined by God’s on-going incarnation in the world today. And this is the third lens of a subversive liberative perspective.

An Incarnation Lens

Incarnate love is the breath-taking centerpiece of Christian faith. The incarnation story begins with God's infinite love. Creation unfolds embraced by a Love that can be deterred by no force in heaven or earth. This love – the love of God -- “will not cease in all the endless ages to come.”²⁷ It is a Love both intimately personal – for everyone without exception, embracing our very being – and expanding vastly beyond the person to envelop creation as a whole. This Love is more magnificent than we can imagine. We human creatures are created and called to recognize this gracious and indomitable love, receive it, relish it, revel in it, and to trust it.

But that is not all. Christian traditions hold that this Spirit of love -- the creating, liberating, healing, sustaining Source -- is at play in the world. It is luring us and the entire creation toward the reign of God, a world in which justice and compassion are lived in their fullness by all and in which all of creation flourishes in the light of God. After receiving and trusting God's love – being claimed by it – we are then to embody it in the world. We are beckoned to be body of God's justice-making Earth-relishing Love working through us, in us, and among us to bring healing from all forms of sin that would thwart God's gift of abundant life for all. That is, God's love is incarnate.

God's call to practice love as the guide and path of human life is declared by Jesus: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment. And second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-9).²⁸ Jesus is calling upon God's commandment expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, to “to love the Lord your God” (Deut. 6:5),” and “to love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). According to Jesus, “all the law and the prophets hang on” the commandments to love (Matt. 22:40). Likewise, Paul cites the Leviticus text in Galatians 5:14: “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”²⁹ Indeed, it is the biblical view that to participate in what God is doing in this world is before all else, to live love into it. From a biblical perspective, loving neighbor as self -- or loving neighbor as God loves -- along with loving God, commonly is seen as the essence of morality.³⁰

Most important for our purposes here, however, is the startling fact that Jesus' words are not only instruction; they are also a declaration of what *will* be. The verb, *agapao*, is in the future indicative. This is the case in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:38-34; Luke 10:25-28). Likewise in the Pauline epistles, "you shall love" is expressing, in the words of New Testament scholar Matthew Whitlock, “assurance in the fulfillment” of this declaration.³¹ This assurance rests on the biblical claim that the actual love of God lives and loves within human beings. It is a profoundly hope-giving claim, particularly as heard by contemporary people caught up in webs of structural injustice from which it is hard to imagine escape. It suggests that love incarnate will reign even where the circumstances of climate change and its brutal social consequences point to the opposite.

The understanding that God's love is incarnate in human beings produces the paradox inherent in Christian moral anthropology. The human creature -- while implicated in horrific systemic cruelty including climate sin – is also abode of the God whose passionate life-giving love is more powerful than any other force in heaven or earth. Christian traditions have articulated the indwelling incarnate presence in humans in two ways.

Christ Indwelling

The first is of Christ indwelling. Whether Christ lives within the entire created world, only within humans, or only within those who claim to be Christian is another question not addressed herein. Regardless, the metaphor is of world (or of humankind or of the church) as body of Christ on Earth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer probed the ethical implications of God's love embodied in human communities. He was adamant, initially, that the love of Christ, revealed most fully in the cross, abides in the Christian community. However, after experiencing non-Christians courageously resisting fascism and the failure of much of the institutional church to do so, he determined that the God-bearing community includes non-Christians who are serving God's purposes. In Bonhoeffer's terms, Christ dwelling in the community of people who embody God's love "conforms" them to "the form of Jesus Christ."³² That is the form is God's overflowing love embodied as community that acts responsibly in the world on behalf of abundant life for all, especially on behalf of those who are persecuted or marginalized. This action requires recognizing structural evil, naming it, and "putting a spoke in the wheel" of earthly powers that demand disobedience to God. The power to resist structural evil, even when so doing is terribly costly, is the actual love of Christ taking form in human community.³³ As revealed in the cross and resurrection, this love is indomitable, even when it appears to be defeated.

Spirit Indwelling³⁴

The second expression of God's incarnate presence is the Holy Spirit. According to the First Testament (or Old Testament), the ancient Hebrews experienced a power emanating from the One whom they called YHWH, reaching into their lives and into the entire created world awakening agency (or *being* agency) for maintaining and restoring relationships that cohere with God's will for life.³⁵ These relationships might be interpersonal, societal, between humans and the Earth, or between God and God's creation. They called this power *ruach*.³⁶

The Second Testament (New Testament) describes a presence and power of God reaching into Jesus' life, speaking to him, leading or driving him, filling him, and empowering him for his work. The writers of these texts called that power *Pneuma* or *Pneuma* (Spirit) of God. Where the Spirit comes upon, fills, speaks to, bids, drives, leads, or anoints Jesus, the result is tremendous power for remaining faithful to God in the face of temptation; for proclaiming the reign of God; and for liberating, healing, and giving sight.³⁷

After Jesus' ascension the apostles – and other people who repented and were baptized -- experienced or witnessed a power of God reaching into their own or other people's lives (Acts 2.38), drawing them to live as they believed God would have them live. This power touched both individuals and communities. These earliest believers apparently understood themselves, as individuals and as a body, to be filled with (Rom.8:9) and led by the Holy Spirit, and to be empowered by and receive gifts from that Spirit for doing the will of God. God's will, in their estimation, included the commandment to love neighbor as self. This power – like that which reached into Jesus' life -- was called *Pneuma* and was understood to be the *Pneuma* of Jesus himself, the risen Christ. Latin translations rendered this "*Pneuma*" as "*Espiritu*" which in turn became "Spirit" for English speakers. In the words of Finnish theologian, Veli-Matti

Karkkainen, the coming of the Spirit was understood to be the coming of God's power and presence to "dwell in and among the people."³⁸ The Gospel according to John holds perhaps the clearest assertion that God has given the Spirit "to be with you forever" to "abide with you" and "in you," and that this Spirit is the Spirit of love. That is, the Spirit comes into us so that we might be lovers of self, others, Earth, and God.

Pneumatology from the first century to the twenty-first affirms that the Spirit enables people to act as God would have them act. In the words of a Catholic theologian, Yves Congar: "The Spirit-Breath is first and foremost what causes [humans] to act so that God's plan in history may be fulfilled."³⁹ If living as God would have us live includes seeking sustainable Earth-human relations marked by social justice, the Spirit within and among may enable that healing work.

Much is not clear. The implications of these findings for how contemporary people are to live and respond to the climate crisis are up for interpretation. It depends, of course, upon how one understands God's will and what it means to "love neighbor as self." Nevertheless, a few things pertaining to moral agency for embodiment of neighbor-love may be said with some surety. The relevant biblical texts, held together, testify that:

- The power and presence of God -- in some way that we cannot comprehend -- is imminent, dwelling within human communities, as well as transcendent.
- The Holy Spirit that is "poured into" communities and individuals is the same power and presence that animated Jesus (Rom. 8:11).
- This Spirit dwelling within communities and individuals brings moral power for neighbor-love.
- That love will be lived out, and will be lived out with many mistakes, short-comings, and other realities of human fallibility and finitude.
- The presence of this Spirit at times has a transformative impact.

Examining the incarnate Spirit in Christian sacred texts yields disconcerting truth. Heeding the Spirit's bidding to follow God's ways may be dangerous. History confirms that following paths of neighbor-love, especially amidst forces of systemic domination, often has been dangerous. It requires courage.

Herein may lie a key to the incarnate Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit renders courage. According to Martin Luther, the most powerful courage known to humankind is generated by the Spirit living in the faithful. He speaks of the power, strength, and courage that may be imparted to the faithful by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ The Spirit brings into its human abode "true courage--boldness of heart." "The Hebrew word for spirit," Luther preaches, "might well be rendered 'bold, undaunted courage.'"⁴¹ That "bold, dauntless courage...will not be terrified by poverty, shame, sin, the devil, or death...."⁴² With courage comes hope.

A significant lacunae presents. We have discussed God's love incarnate in human beings, ignoring its presence in the rest of creation. Significant streams of Christian tradition hold that Christ and God's Spirit abide within and among the creatures and elements of God's Earth -- not only the human creatures -- breathing life in to them. The claim is ever-present in Orthodox Christianity, is central to the sacramentality of Roman Catholicism, and is richly declared by some Protestant voices. This claim bears tremendous potential for moral agency. Here, bounded

by the limits of a single paper, we have focused on God incarnate in the human, and for good reason: We are the problem.

Three lenses held together

What do these three lenses held together reveal? If Christians are called to anything, it is to:

- take seriously the crucifixion,
- trust resurrection, and
- practice incarnation

This is more than a calling. It is the reality within which life unfolds, to be recognized or not.

PART FOUR: Incarnation as Resistance and Rebuilding

What then does it mean to practice incarnation in the face of climate reality? What does it mean to embody the love of God revealed in Jesus? What love is and requires is the great moral question permeating Christian history. For two millennia, people who follow Jesus have struggled to grasp what it means to claim that God's love takes on fleshly form in the human creature. Just as God is both intimately knowable and infinitely beyond our knowing, so too is love; the nature of neighbor-love flowing from divine love is beyond full comprehension.

What can be said is that the love of God – as known in the tradition of the Hebrew Bible and Jesus -- seeks to address suffering and seeks to undo oppression and exploitation that cause suffering. Love, therefore, is contextual and asks different things of people based upon their situations. Jesus bids us ask, “What does it mean *in our here and now* to love neighbor as God loves us?” This is fitting, for the Holy One revealed in Jesus is a living God, dynamically and actively engaged in the world, not a God of timeless concrete rules implemented in the same way for all people in every situation. Thus, in the words of theologian Daniel Day Williams, *“Love...changes form and brings new forms into being.... God in his creativity and freedom reforms the modes of loves expression.”*⁴³

We must, then, ask what it means for climate privileged peoples to practice incarnate love in the face of climate debt: What is love's bidding for those of us who are disproportionately responsible for climate change and owe our material wealth to the fossil-fuel economies that generated the climate crisis? Love, I submit, means faithfully seeking to dismantle the power structures and ways of life that undergird climate change.⁴⁴ And – in the footsteps of Jesus – this calls for wedding of resistance and rebuilding in a spirit of rejoicing.

Resistance and rebuilding are intertwining streams in the movement toward climate justice. One alone cannot begin to free us from our bondage to climate catastrophic ways of living. “Resistance” means refusing to participate in some aspects of the global economic system that are fast destroying earth's atmosphere and countless communities and lives. Boycotting, divesting in fossil fuels, and withdrawing money from large corporate banking are examples. “Rebuilding” signifies supporting more socially just and ecologically healthy alternatives that are accountable to a “triple bottom line” (social, ecological, and financial). These alternatives pertain to all levels of social being: household/individual, corporate, institutions of civil society,

and public policy. Examples include small-scale and local or regional business and banking, local sustainable agriculture, and investing in renewable energy. Resistance and rebuilding are meant as a “way of life” not merely as incidents in the midst of it. This duo is anchored in Christian theology as *denouncing* that which thwarts the in-breaking reign of God and *announcing* that which furthers it.

Resistance and rebuilding – as an expression of love known in Jesus and his scriptures -- will be practiced in a mode of being that is vastly foreign to the consciousness of contemporary U.S. society, formed as it is by the individualism of modernity and the privatization of neo-liberalism. Incarnation as resistance and rebuilding will take fruitful form in a communal and ancestral mode. I make no claim to understand fully what these two features entail. My aim is more humble – to offer them as pointers to be tested and explored as we forge our way into a future that we do not yet know.

Communal

To explain “communal,” the wrong question is helpful. “What does it mean for me to live as if risen from the dead, and to live as if the Spirit of God is incarnate in my body, has made Her home in my being?” This is the wrong question. Resurrection and incarnation in Christian tradition are not primarily a matter of *I* and *me*. Rather, resurrection and incarnation are communal realities.

We rise from and against death dealing ways of life and we embody God not primarily as individuals. Rather, we do this as woven into a body, a web, a communion, a mystery beyond our ken. After his crucifixion when Jesus appears to his disciples who were still living in terror, he addressed them with a plural “you.” For example, in John’s story (chapter 14) set in the upper chamber, when individual disciples address Jesus he responds in the plural. “Let not your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1) refers to the community’s heart. The “your” is plural. When the Spirit comes at Pentecost She comes to a body of people.

God – abiding within us – is calling forth a communion. It is a reality that even the disciples did not yet perceive. Nor do we – except in glimpses. In the imagery of Irenaeus of Lyons, it is a union and communion among those who hear God, and between them and Godself. In the Norwegian film, “As it is in Heaven,” a musician creates music that brings life to deadened hearts. When asked what he is doing in creating such music, he responds that he is “calling down the music that already exists.” In our communities of resistance and rebuilding, we are calling down the communion (the music) that already exists but that we only glimpse dimly. This communion that we are called to embody in faithful resistance and rebuilding is our home.

Practicing incarnation means discovering ever more fully what it means to live into this already given union and communion with divine love that ultimately will overcome all forms of death and destruction, including the climate injustice that threatens to undo us, destroying the very people whom we are called to love and the garden that we are called to tend. This communion is not a present reality alone – it is a past, present and future reality. It includes those who will come after us and those who came before, the ancestors.

Ancestral

Christians and others who seek justice in the face of exploitation and domination stand in a heritage of resistance and rebuilding. The early church told stories and believed that the community was shaped by an epic story in which they were players.⁴⁵ They deemed it vital that the church perceive itself within a heritage of resistance to whatever powers-that-be demanded them to defy God's ways and will. Today that includes resistance to lifestyles, public policies, and economic practices that generate climate change, enable some to accumulate wealth at great cost to others and to Earth, reinscribe white privilege, or justify any other form of structural sin.

Faith communities embodying love by seeking climate justice and garden Earth's renewal will highlight that heritage of resistance in sermon, song, and sacrament. We will tell this sacred story in art and education, in prayer and celebration. What kinds of moral power will emerge if the practices of Christian communities teach our children that they walk in the footsteps of fiercely faithful, loving, Spirit-filled resisters whose words and deeds said "no" to ways of life that transgressed God's call to justice-making Earth-serving love. This is the heritage of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus who refused to comply with the ways of empire, the early church whose declaration that "Jesus is Lord" defied imperial Rome, the abolitionists, the "righteous gentiles" who defied Hitler's death machine, the Huguenots in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon whose quiet resistance saved 4,000 Jews even while occupied by fascist forces, the civil rights movement, and more. What if our youth learned that this is "the people" into whom they were baptized? What if our children frequently heard sermons such as that preached by one of my pastors: "I could empathize with Paul in prison," she declared, "because last time I was in prison, I too was in solitary confinement." She had been jailed many times for protesting the Trident nuclear submarines stationed near Seattle.

Contemporary Christians and others who long for climate justice and Earth's healing will be more apt in the arts of resistance and rebuilding if we locate ourselves in this rich heritage of resistance to dominant powers where they demand people to transgress ways of God's love. This ancestry is at the heart of Christian and Hebrew scriptures. Knowing it breeds courage and wisdom. Where we honor it as our ancestral home, present in our present, we will be more fertile ground for incarnate love that resists climate violence and rebuilds Earth-honoring, neighbor-loving ways of living.

IN CLOSING

U.S. citizens of relative economic privilege bear a sacred calling. It is to reverse a fiercely compelling trajectory of climate violence. That is, we are called to resist ways of life and power structures that generate climate change and its disproportionate impact on the world's already impoverished people, and to rebuild Earth serving love-bearing ways of being human in the 21st century. Where we will find the moral agency for that massive shift is the question of this essay.

One clear factor in moral inertia is failure fully to acknowledge the depth of the crisis and in particular the extent to which those who "suffer most acutely [from climate change] are also those who are least responsible for the crisis to date."⁴⁶ We have noted ingredients of that moral

oblivion – “blindness of climate privilege” -- and then have focused on one of them. It is the guilt, shame and despair that may accompany daring to see more clearly.

It falls to people of all religious traditions to plumb the depths of our respective traditions for the particular gifts of wisdom and moral power offered by God to the world through these traditions. Those gifts include resources for overcoming moral oblivion, hopelessness, and other obstacles to moral agency. If Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and other faith traditions do not do so, then the gifts given to them for the sake of the world have fallen on rocky soil.

One resource offered by Christianity is a three-fold lens for viewing life that may enable facing the climate crisis with hope, and thereby engender moral power for the seemingly undoable task of forging sustainable Earth-human relations marked by social justice. It is the lens of crucifixion, resurrection, and incarnation. This means facing the brutality of climate debt and our implication in it, trusting that life will reign over death and destruction, and embodying God’s love by resisting ways of life that breed climate change and rebuilding alternatives. We will do so not as isolated individuals but rather as beings moving into union and communion with Earth’s web of life and with its creating, liberating intimate Source whom some know as God, and as descendants of fallible yet courageous resisters. Our splendid charge is to repent and lament, and then to practice incarnate love through resistance and rebuilding. While we do not know where this path leads, we do know – according to central biblical claims -- that nothing will separate us or this good garden Earth from the love of God made manifest in, but not only in, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8: 38-39).

¹ This paper is an expanded and revised version of a chapter to be published in a handbook on religion and ecology edited by John Hart.

² At the UN Summit on Climate Change, Copenhagen, Sept 22, 2009.

³ “Climate vulnerable,” in the discourse of climate change refers to nations and sectors within them that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including drought, fierce storms, rising sea-levels, disease, food shortage, and more. As defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “vulnerability” refers to “the degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes.” IPCC Working Group 2, 2001. *Third Assessment Report, Annex B: Glossary of Terms*. “Climate privilege” is a term that I use to indicate nations and sectors most able to adapt to or minimize some of those impacts, or less vulnerable to them.

⁴ As recognized by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, climate change “represents the gravest of threats to the survival” of some island nations. (See <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>.)

⁵ Another example is the 40% of the world’s population whose lives depend upon water from the seven rivers fed by rapidly diminishing Himalayan glaciers. They are largely not white people.

⁶ The National Council of Churches in India declares: “Climate change and global warming are caused by the colonization of the atmospheric commons. The subaltern communities are denied of their right to atmospheric commons and the powerful nations and the powerful within the developing nations continue to extract from the atmospheric common disproportionately. In that process they have emitted and continue to emit greenhouse gases beyond the capacity of the planet to withstand. However the subaltern communities with almost zero footprint are forced to bear the brunt susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes.” IPCC Working Group 2, 2001. *Third Assessment Report, Annex B: Glossary of Terms*. “Climate privilege” is a term that I use to indicate nations and sectors most able to adapt to or minimize some of those impacts, or less vulnerable to them.

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⁶ The National Council of Churches in India declares: "Climate change and global warming are caused by the colonization of the atmospheric commons. The subaltern communities are denied of their right to atmospheric commons and the powerful nations and the poor the consequences of global warming."

⁷ Climate debt theory derives from the more established body of theory pertaining to ecological debt, which posits three kinds of ecological debt. For more on ecological debt, see the websites of the Southern People's Ecological Debt Creditor Alliance (SPEDCA), European Network for the Recognition of Ecological Debt (ENRED), Ecuador's *Accion Ecologica*, England's Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth International, and WCC. See also Athena L. Peralta, ed., *Ecological Debt: The Peoples of the South are Creditors, Cases from Ecuador, Mozambique, Brazil and India* (Quezon City: WCC, 2004); Andrew Simms, *Ecological Debt: The Health of the Planet and the Wealth of Nations* (Pluto Press, 2005); and WCC Central Committee, "Statement on Eco-justice and Ecological Debt," 2009 at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2009/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-eco-justice-and-ecological-debt>. An excellent theorizing of the concept and its application to national energy and climate policy is in E. Paredis, et. al., *The Concept of Ecological Debt: Its Meaning and Applicability in International Policy*. Academia, 2008. For its definition of ecological debt which includes only intra-generational ecological debt, see p. x.

⁸ Article 3(1) of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) addresses this responsibility by obligating the global North to take the lead on efforts to combat climate change. William Rees and Laura Westra take a step further, suggesting that "global society has a moral imperative" to "ensure that those responsible for making environmental demands assume the main responsibility for the consequences of their activity" and that "we will need no less than the strongest powers of international law" to do so (116). "Not acting to reduce or prevent eco-injustice," they go on, "would convert erstwhile blameless consumer choices into acts of aggression" (116). Taking a cue from Canadian national negligence law and the Criminal Code of Canada (section 219), they argue that "lack of intent to harm is no defense if damage results from acts performed in careless disregard for others" (118). "William Rees and Laura Westra, "When Consumption Does Violence," in *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*, ed. Julian Agyeman, Robert D. Bullard and Bob Evans (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 116. To date the issue of state or corporate legal liability for climate violence remains unresolved and is highly controversial. It is a key moral question before the high-consuming world today.

⁹ Maxine Burkett, "Climate Reparations," *Melbourne Journal of International Law* Vol. 10 (2009), 2.

¹⁰ Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, "Climate Change as Climate Debt: Forging a Just Future." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36.1 (Spring/Summer 2016).

¹¹ By "economically privileged" I connote people whose economic lives might be described in the following terms: their income is not totally dependent upon wages or salaries. They have back-up resources (i.e., family support, possibility of buying a less expensive home, investments, etc.). A severe recession probably would not place them in a position of having no home, inadequate food, or no access to healthcare, transportation, or other necessities. Perhaps more significant to this project, the economically privileged have enough economic resources that, without jeopardizing the basic ingredients of life for themselves and their dependents, they *could* make economic choices (pertaining to consumption, investment, employment, etc.) that would serve the cause of climate justice *even if those choices were to diminish their own financial bottom line*. They could choose, for example, to buy local, divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in ecologically responsible investment funds, purchase a hybrid car or commuter bike, boycott products even if they are less expensive than the alternative, take time away from income earning work and dedicate that time to efforts for social change. This category of "economically privileged" is porous. The terms involved are fluid, and the people fitting this description of economic privilege occupy widely-ranging economic strata. Nevertheless, the intent is to signify the large body of U.S. citizens whose economic status bears these characteristics. This paragraph is drawn from Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

¹² These I refer to respectively as the descriptive task of ethics and the transformative task of ethics.

¹³ In Moe-Lobeda, "Climate Change as Climate Debt," I propose four tools from Christian ethics for "seeing what is going on" in climate change.

¹⁴ By "blindness" I mean factors that enable those most responsible for climate change to ignore it and our responsibility for it.

¹⁵ Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, chap. 4.

¹⁶ SEE 2013 World Bank report at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/06/19/what-climate-change-means-africa-asia-coastal-poor>.

¹⁷ I would change “humankind” to “parts of humankind.” Charles C. Mann, “How-to-talk-about-climate-change-so-people-will-listen,” *Atlantic Monthly* on line Aug 13, 2014.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/09/how-to-talk-about-climate-change-so-people-will-listen/375067/>

¹⁸ See Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 88-90 and 117-130 for elaboration of this idea.

¹⁹ See Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) for discussion of the “radical hope” required to look toward “a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is” (104).

²⁰ See most recent report (2014) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for an account of what has been and will be destroyed by climate change. (<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/index.shtml>)

²¹ These factors are joined by other factors of a social structural nature. I examine one such factor -- corporate investment in maintaining public moral oblivion -- in *Resisting Structural Evil*, 98-100. Another -- the subordination of political power to economic power -- is the subject of Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God*, chapter two.

²² While I do not see Christianity as holding superior moral wisdom for the work of Earth-healing, I do believe that it bears a unique burden. Christianity, inseparably wound up in the philosophical, ideological, and cosmological assumptions of modernity, has contributed immeasurably to the Earth crisis. Scholars and activists have analyzed those contributions endlessly. Doing so is essential; for only by recognizing them can we rethink and reconstruct. Re-hashing that story is not my project here. I assume the damage done by Christian beliefs and practices undergirding human dominion and oppression. I assume also that, having played this historic role, Christianity bears a tremendous responsibility to offer its resources to the pan-human task of rebuilding Earth’s health. Yet I write out of a sister assumption, a conviction that the damage wrought by Christianity is matched and surpassed by the potential within Christianity for helping to build new ways of being human marked by equity among people and mutually enhancing Earth-human relations.

²³ More specifically, “climate debt” refers to the disproportionate per capita use of the atmospheric space for carbon sinks by industrialized countries in the past and present. The term, “climate debt,” entered the international discourse with the 1992 UN Conference at Rio de Janeiro, where it was introduced by Latin American NGOs. Some refer to climate debt as “carbon debt.” It is seen as one form of “ecological debt.” While climate debt is technically only one form of ecological debt, some analysts use the two terms interchangeably.

²⁴ For an account of climate violence as structural sin. See Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, ch. 3.

²⁵ Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 24.

²⁶ Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 249.

²⁷ Hadewijch of Brabant, 13th century mystic and poet. Columba Hart, ed. *The Complete Works of Hdewijch*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

²⁸ See also Mark 12:38-34 and Luke 10:25-28. The Second Testament iterates the command to love neighbor as self eight times: Matt. 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8

²⁹ See also Romans 13:10.

³⁰ This claim is widely held in Christian academic and ecclesial circles. Two prominent voices articulating it from Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions respectively are Daniel Maguire and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. “[T]he whole thrust of biblical religion is toward the recovery of the broken human capacity to love,” asserts Maguire in *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 208. “Our responsibility as Christians,” insists Martin Luther King, Jr., “is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives” in “Strength to Love,” *A Testament of Hope: the Essential Writings and Speeches of M. L. King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 48. Here King is speaking specifically of the commandment to love enemies.

³¹ Matthew Whitlock, in conversation. Whitlock goes on to explain that Paul, in Galatians 5:14, sees Leviticus 19:18 as a promise fulfilled in Christ and in the Church.

³² For Bonhoeffer, conformation with the form of Christ implies refusing conformation with ways of life that betray Christ. His use of “gestaltung” for “conformation” is a play on the word used by Hitler to mean conforming to fascism. Conformation with the form of Christ crucified, for Bonhoeffer—in response to his context—came to mean both standing on behalf of the persecuted, and assuming the guilt of the Western world. This convergence of two meanings assumes very personal meaning for Bonhoeffer. He lived them both: he was imprisoned and executed for an assassination plot that was, in significant part, a defense of (standing on behalf of) those persecuted by the Nazi regime. At the same time, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, he refers often to his role as the guilty, assuming

the guilt of Germany and of the Western world. In this sense, Bonhoeffer's understanding of the cross bridges the gap between theologies of the cross that see Christ atoning for human sin and theologies of the cross that see Christ executed by imperial power for his allegiance to the compassionate and justice-making reign of God. The cross for Bonhoeffer was both.

33. He writes: "The relation between the divine love and human love is wrongly understood if we say that the divine love [is]... solely for the purpose of setting human love in motion . . . On the contrary . . . the love with which [humans] love God and neighbor is the love of God and no other. . . [T]here is no love which is free or independent from the love of God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 55–56.

³⁴ Parts of this section come from Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, chap. 6.

³⁵ In addition to works cited, this section draws upon Alasdair Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1983); Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Mark Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985).

36. *Ruach* (like *pneuma*, *espíritu* and *spirit*, its most frequent renditions in Greek, Latin, and English respectively) has multiple denotations and connotations in the First Testament. Its meanings shift over the centuries and among different cultures within it. Those meanings range from a forceful movement of air to the fundamental energy of God. Our concern here is the last of these. *Ruach* is used 378 times in the Hebrew Bible (Congar, 3), 264 of which are translated in the Septuagint as *pneuma* [Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Pneumatology*, (Ada, MI: Baker, 2002), 25]. *Ruach* appears only three times as "holy" *ruach* (Isa. 63.10 and 11 and Ps. 51.11). *Neshamah* also is rendered "spirit" or "breath" in English." However, where the Spirit is that of Yahweh, it is *ruach*.

³⁷ These acts lead some people to follow Jesus and others to become furious with him. That anger often is somewhat cloaked. It becomes dangerous and ultimately deadly for Jesus.

³⁸ Karkkainen, *Pneumatology*, 34.

³⁹ Yves Congar, *The Holy Spirit in the Economy*, vol. 1 of *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman and New York: Seabury, 1983), 4.

40. Martin Luther in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, John Nicholas Lenker, ed. (Ada, MI: Baker, 1992), 8:277

41. *Ibid*, 8:275.

42. *Ibid*, 8: 275-6.

⁴³ Daniel Day Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 4-5, 9.

⁴⁴ This paper cannot also address implications for specific public policy changes. I illustrate those implications in Moe-Lobeda, "Climate Debt, White Privilege and Christian Ethics as Political Theology," in Catherine Keller, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, and Elias Ortega-Aponte, eds. *Common Good(s): Economy, Ecology, Political Theology*. New York: Fordham Press, 2015 and in Moe-Lobeda, "Climate Change as Climate Debt: Forging a Just Future." For more extensive accounts of policy implications, see Burkett, "Climate Reparations," and Carmen Gonzalez, "Environmental Justice and International Environmental Law," in Shawkat Alam, Jahid Hossain Bhuiyan, Tareq M.R. Chowdhury, Erika Techara, eds., *Routledge Handbook of International Environmental Law* (Routledge, 2012).

⁴⁵ Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 189-210.

⁴⁶ Burkett, 2.