The variegated responses of religious communities to a changing climate

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How are the World’s Religions responding to Climate Change? (Routledge, 2014)

For summary, see also:

I. Starting Points

II. What do we know about religion & climate change?

III. Religion as a climate change movement?

IV. A theory that tries to explain and offer practical suggestions...
I. Starting Points

- CC as GLOBAL phenomenon
  - BUT, Local particularities will be more important
  - “place pluralism”

- Similarly, Religion is treated as an undifferentiated phenomenon.
  - But, “religion” is immensely diverse

- Attend to Institutional, LIVED
  - continuity with continuing modification
Fig. 1. (a) The dominance (≥ 50%) of major global religions calculated at the country level, and (b) the distribution and spatial overlap of biodiversity templates (Table 1) used in the analysis (numbers and corresponding colour intensity indicate how many of the seven templates coincide spatially).
Bad Example #2

- The vast majority of ind’l’z’d survey measures.
  - E.g., Barker & Bearce, 2013. “End times theology... & resistance to addressing CC” Poli Sci Quart.

- Methodological individualism
- Disassembles from sociological context!
- Link of Values → Behaviour assumed-NO!
  - Demographic simplification/uniformitarianism

- OTHER Problems
  - “religiously orthodox”
  - Cognitive bias
  - Too much focus on American evangelicals
    - “we are pessimist because...”
    - World Evangelical Alliance: “Americans are an exception!”
Starting points

- Environmentally – has religion come more quickly than many institutions (e.g., health care, engineering, etc.)
  - Relates to its claims about “createdness” and presence/absence of more than the world of the senses.

- Any tradition is BOTH universalizing and particularizing

Religion, Climate Change – both are “GLOCAL” but local particularities will be significant.
Religion responding to CC: What does the Research Show?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldviews</th>
<th>Values-Motives</th>
<th>Engages Public (reach)</th>
<th>Institutional Resources (Narrative, orgl, $)</th>
<th>History of Hum/Justice Work</th>
<th>Local social capital</th>
<th>Transnat Cncts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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![Graph showing data points across different categories]

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HOW are Faith Groups responding to Climate Change?

1. Humanitarian & Development Aid
2. Cosmological Attention
3. Faith Statements by leaders / Interfaith Cooperation
4. Climate Justice engagements
5. Some collective mobilization

- Research is limited; mostly on Ind’l Americans.
1. Humanitarian/Development/Justice response to threats
3. Faith statements / Interfaith Cooperation

4. ...and communicating Climate Justice

Participants in Interfaith Summit on Climate Change in New York, 2014

CONTENTS

1. A Theology for Climate Justice
2. Canada’s Climate Challenge: Advocating for Climate Justice
3. Workshop Outline:
   Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Beyond
4. Voices from the Global South
5. Climate Change Timeline
6. Worship Suggestions
7. People Get Ready:
8. Global Climate Change and You


4. Mobilization: Faith Communities
5. Humanitarian/Development/Justice response to threats

“Threat Multiplier”: EXISTING INEQUALITIES, CONFLICTS AND WEAK RESILIENCE WILL BE EXACERBATED
5. Humanitarian/Development/Justice response to threats

EXISTING INEQUALITIES, CONFLICTS AND WEAK RESILIENCE WILL BE EXACERBATED
WHAT else do we know about R&CC?

- Counter movements re: Climate Change
  - Beware of misunderstanding…
  1) Political ideology – a more salient variable
  2) Climate challenges …
    - Stability of the world –
      “Ontological Security” (Christian, Muslim, Hindu)
      - Puny human capacity *vis a vis* all-powerful God
      - Human ingenuity not all-good!
      - Intervention of God?
WHAT do we know about R&CC?

- Counter movements re: Climate Change
  - Beware of misunderstanding…
    1) Political ideology more salient
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- Not unique to Religious
III. Religions as social movements?

- Religious movements (RESMOs)
- As part of social movements (Climate Justice movement)
  - SMOs in the movement field
  - Providing resources/framing

- Contentious politics – mvts pressure other actors
- Internal movements (intra-institutional mvts too)
- Public/Political theology as “framing”? 
Publicness of Religious Frames

- Political Theology is: 
  “religiously infused… vision[s] for society” and how to work for these visions (Wilson & Steger, 2013, p. 482)

- “Frames” are cognitive schemes, imposing a meaning (or way of seeing)

- Frames are explanatory and prescriptive

- When movement frames are “taken up” by the public, the movement’s cognitive praxis (worldview applied in practice) is normalized.
  - Important role for “critical communities”/epistemic communities
WCC ("Climate Justice" since 1980s)

Care for creation and climate justice — World Council of Churches

Time for Creation
Videos

Care for creation and climate justice

Care for creation and justice are at the centre of WCC work on climate change. The Bible teaches the wholeness of creation and calls human beings to take care of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). The God of the Bible is a God of justice who protects, loves and cares for the most vulnerable among his creatures.

The WCC and climate change

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The present world development model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people on earth. The WCC calls for a new, just, and sustainable society.
R&CC Movement? Ex #2: *Laudato Si’*

**Encyclical themes**

- Urgency of environmental degradation (CC is a part)
- Impact on Poor
- Integral Ecology (authentic human development as material & Metaphysical – cosmology, incarnational, spirit+)
- Technocracy
- Cultural Revolution
- Interplay of Science and Faith
Pope Visits America + Media coverage

- Urgency of environmental degradation (CC is a part) - YES!
- Impact on Poor - YES!
- Integral Ecology - Weakly, then, NO
- Technocracy - Weakly
- Cultural Revolution - Weakly
- Interplay of Science and Faith - NO
Answering the question:

- What can we realistically expect of religious-based climate activism....

- How Movements Matter?
  - Political engagement?
  - Cultural engagement?

- Are R & CC “frames” taken up by “the people” to create a mobilization for change?
Bourdieu's Concepts (summarized)

The FIELD

a "practical sense" of living

Habitus

A "logic of practice"

Bourdieu's Concepts (applied)

Sustainable society

Ecological Habitus

Living well (environmentally) without trying

A theory that (tries) to take into account scale, process, agency, routinization....
Relating individual practice with societal structure and movement agency

Faith groups as mediating structures?
V. Conclusion

- Religion needs to be studied in its complexity
- Dynamics of Contention:
  - Religious CC Mvt is highly intra-institutional
  - Potentially powerful, resourced, reach, but culturally entrenched
- Frame Bridging to other Justice Movements

MUCH BASIC RESEARCH NECESSARY

- Conditions of conservative, progressive
- Operations in the Post-secular?
  - (analysis of longterm responses, e.g., to encyclical)
- Nature + Religion + Political Theology = Political Ecology in action?
The Catholic Church is now more progressive on both Science and Social issues than the Republican Party.

Just let that sink in for a minute...

America, there must be Economic Justice, Immigration Reform and Climate Change Action!

43% of Republicans now say you're Muslim.