



WASTE: Theology

Methodist Church:

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New Zealand Christians in Science

THE ESSENCE
OF KEEPING
FAITH WITH
SCIENCE

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Nau mai ki Hahi Tautaiaro o Aotearoa!

Churches across Aotearoa New Zealand actively caring for God's earth as an integral part of their mission.

About Eco Church NZ

A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand



In the Beginning

Genesis 1:27 -28

So God created humans in God's own image, in the image of God they were created

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and **subdue it.** Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:15

The Lord God took the human and put them in the Garden of Eden to **serve and preserve it.**

A photograph of a beach littered with numerous discarded plastic water bottles. The bottles are scattered across the dark sand, some lying on their sides and others partially buried. The background shows the ocean under a heavy, overcast sky with dark, moody clouds. The overall tone is somber and emphasizes environmental pollution.

Plastic is waste is defilement

So what does the Bible say about defilement of the earth

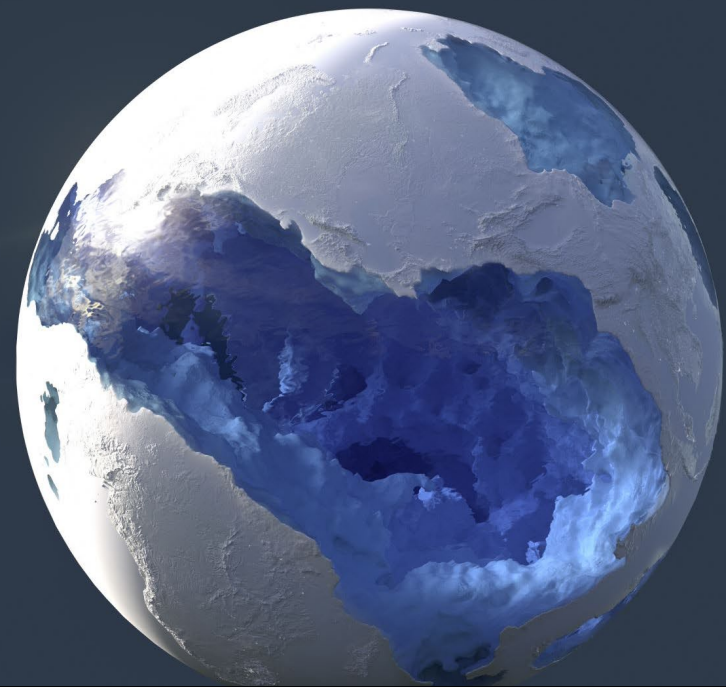
Revelation and pollution: The destroyers of the earth

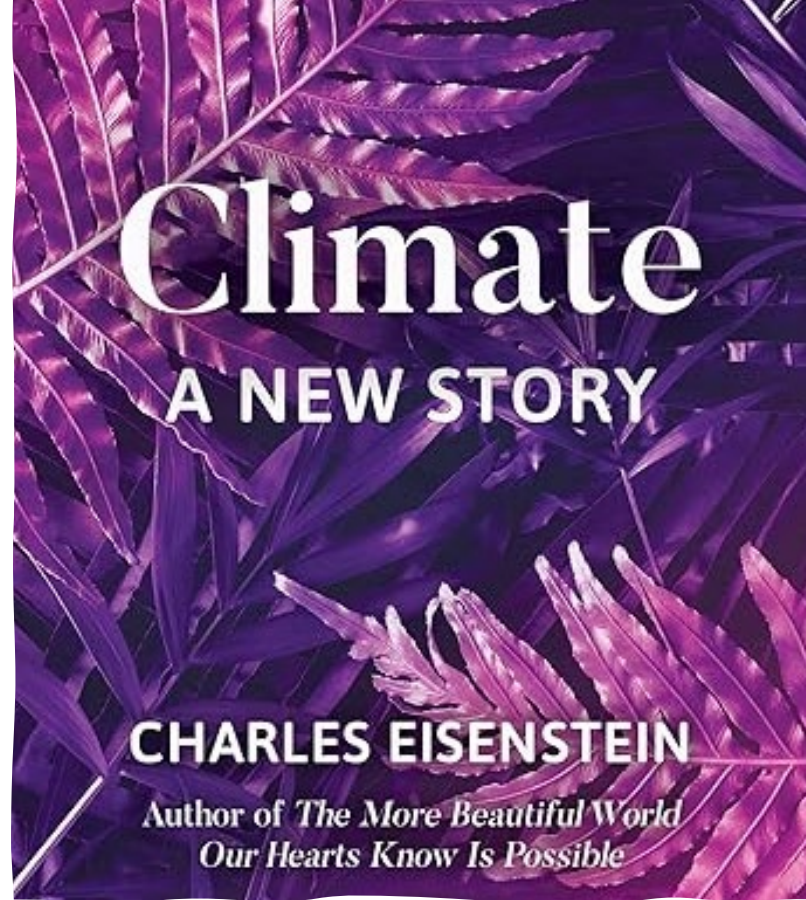
In the Bible pollution is both moral and material

Numbers 35:34

Isaiah 24:4-6

Rev 11:18





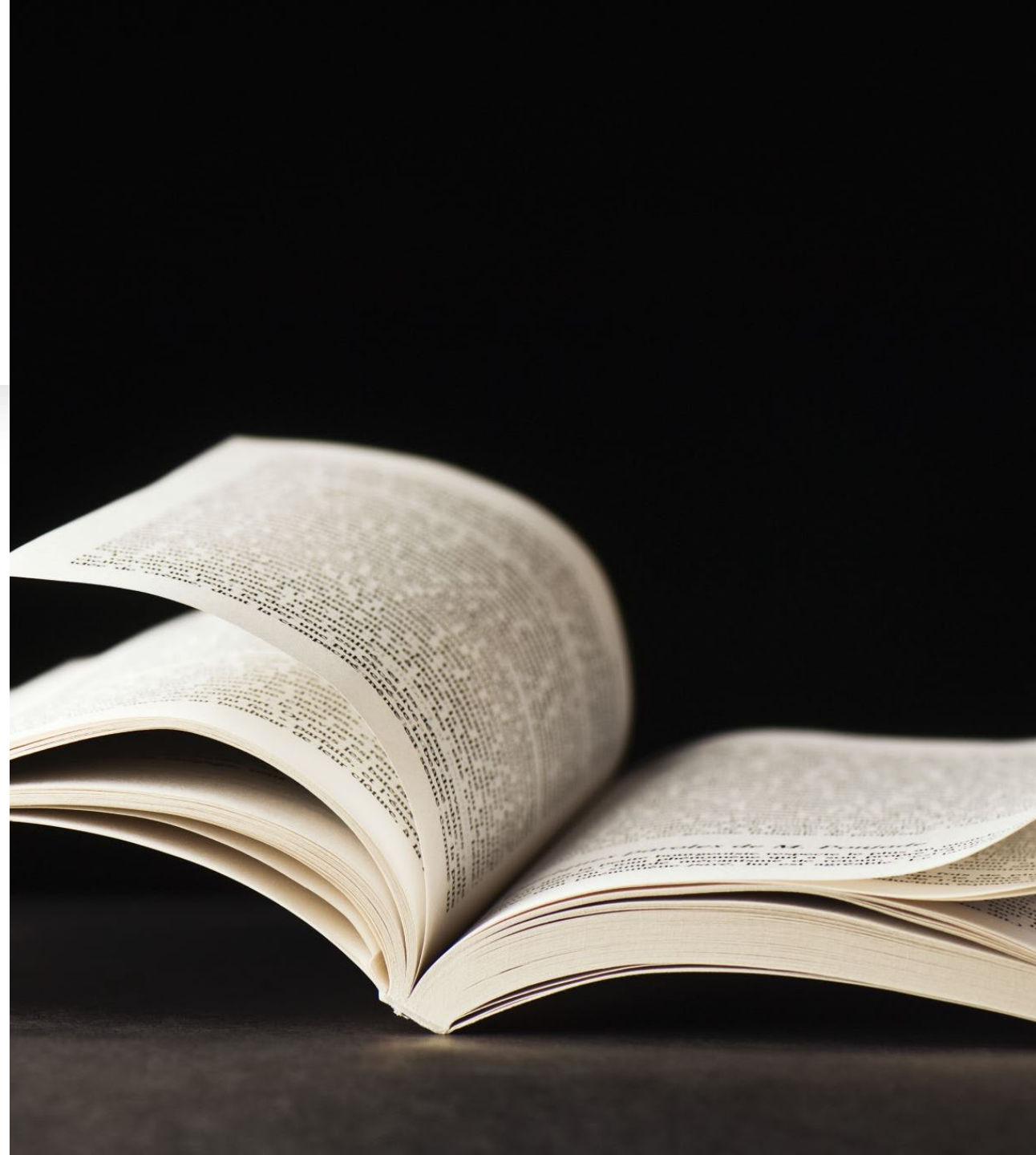
Pollution: The Destroyers of the Earth can be

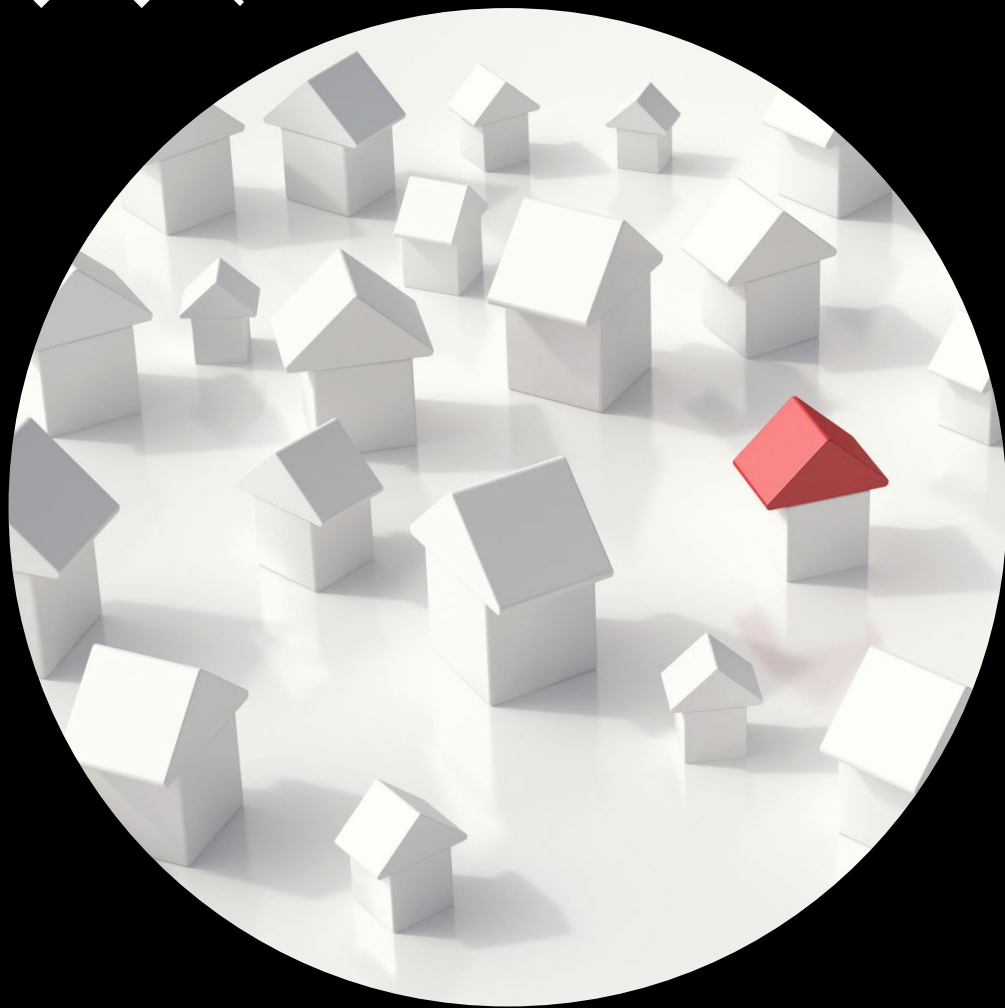
Polluters who create **visible** pollution like Lydia talks about

Or **invisible** pollution, like micro-plastics, forever chemicals, carbon dioxide, methane and so on.

The ill effects we experience are the work of humanity and not of a vengeful God

But the Bible does point out that defilement and pollution, both moral and material do have consequences





SUMMARY: How we fail to serve and preserve

Three ways in which Christians fail to help with creation care

- Feeling too small
- Passivity because God is so powerful
- Not thinking it matters because of our anthropology or eschatology

Three ways we can help

- Paying attention
- Understanding our interconnectedness
- Theology/Churches



1. **Feeling helpless:** the powers of heaven and earth are against us?

Defilement does not happen intentionally

We are all parts of a huge system driven by market forces and big corporations seeking profit.



War
Bankers
Multinational corporations
Melting ice
Escaping permafrost
Strongman leaders

Why does it matter that we do our little bit?

Romans 8:28

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.— sovereignty

Revisions –

We know that God works all things for good together with those who love God

God is taking those who love God as God's partners in doing what God wants to do.

- God has promised to work with us!!
- Because a single man 2000 years ago changed the world
 - And in fact also faced up to the powers and principalities
- Because healing is our calling and there is a lot to heal
- Because sometimes cities and corporations are on the side of the angels
- Sometimes doing our little bit affects the suppliers

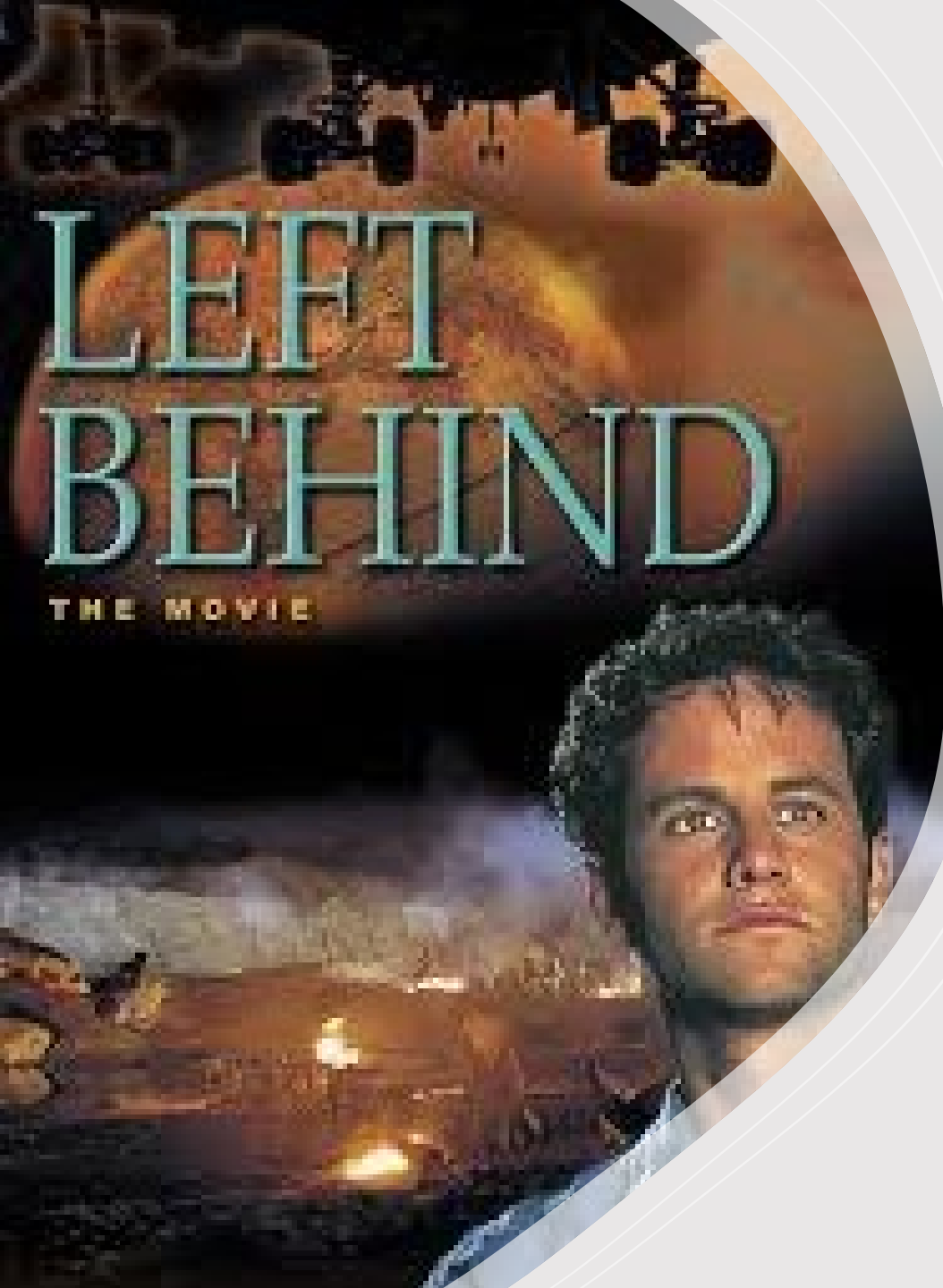
2. Motivation: Surely
God is in control?
Surely we can just
leave it all to God?
Surely we are too
fallen to make a
difference?





Passivity and fatalism Christian failings

- God is present, but not in a way that cancels out our frailties or our deeds
 - Working with God
 - We speak of fallenness, but that should not be a sign of a metaphysical change, and should not lead to fatalism about our future and our agency
-



3. Body, soul,
spirit, end times
and all that

Eschatology and dualism: two extremes

- Certainly at times in Christian history **eschatology** (or end times) has been a demotivator
- As has a hard **body/spirit** dualism where only spirit matters
- Also forms of **materialism** are also a problem because there is emphasis only on new heavens and new earth
- As has a move away from **nature** as a theological source
- As has a theology of **Fall** which sees humans as so corrupted that we cannot do good

Matter and spirit both matter

- Whatever happens materiality matters. It is a part of the story, as it was for Jesus. But his resurrected body bore the scars of this life.
- What we do does endure for good and ill—whatever the future brings.
- Matter matters, but so does Spirit
- Māori an example of a cosmology that honours ancestors/tipuna/spirits but also honours the earth

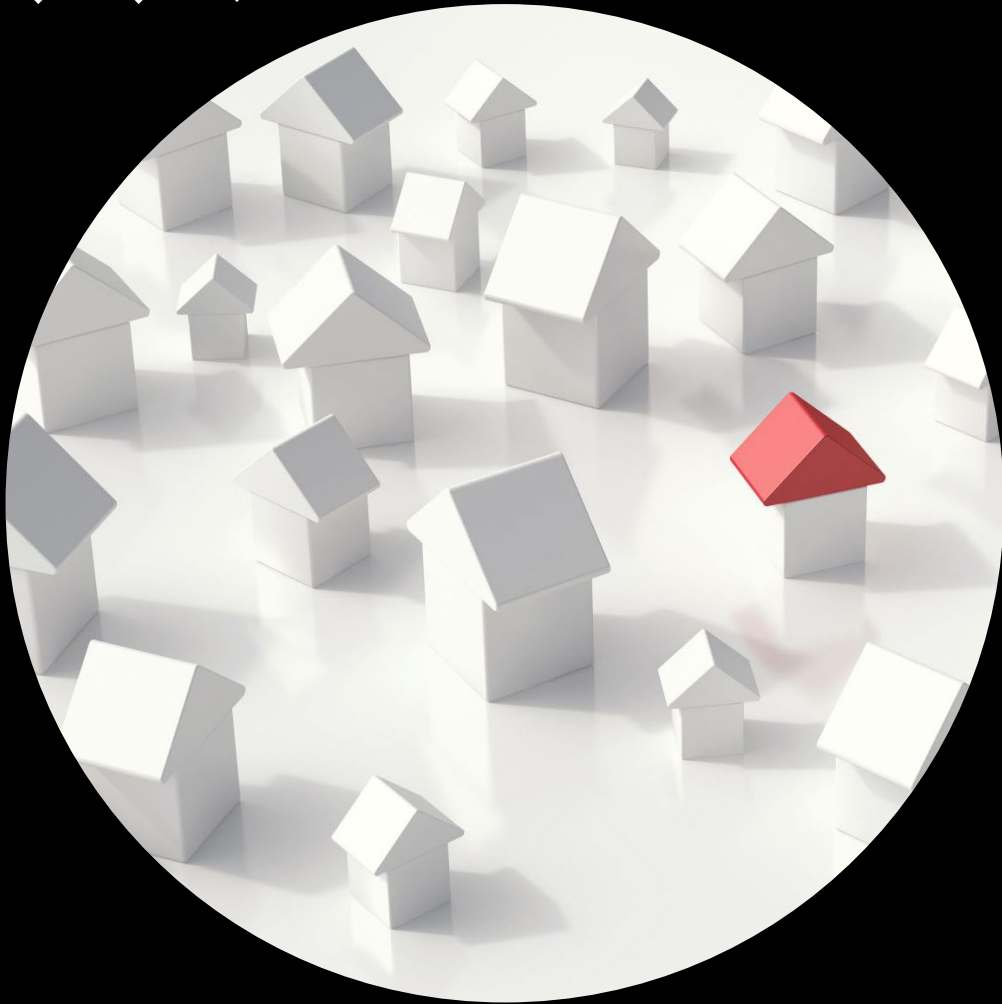




What Helps

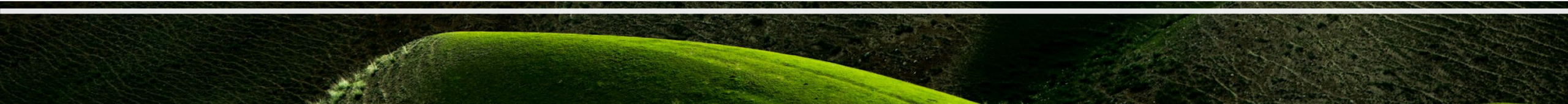
Humans to serve and preserve

- Contemplation
- Sense of connectedness
- Theology and Church





1. Paying attention: Contemplation as a part of the resistance





Nature has a face

.... In the Psalter, that classic anthology of Hebrew poetry and song, is to be found an aesthetic appreciation of the inner life. .. Here nature presents a face here, expresses an inner life, only because it is at the same time disclosed as being turned radically and ecstatically toward a distance unto which all the resonance of that life is directed, and from which that life is itself derived.

--Bruce Foltz

The world does not speak. We should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face.--Dawkins

**Lynn White Jr. : Christians have an
instrumental view of nature because of
Genesis**

**But what we need is a revival of the
Franciscan wisdom within our churches**

*We shall continue to have a
worsening ecological crisis
until we reject the Christian
axiom that nature exists only
to help [humans].*

- Attention means not picking a plastic bottle
- Not throwing away plastic in a place that could get into the sea
- Being aware of the interconnectedness of land, plastic and sea and the animals that all depend on them.



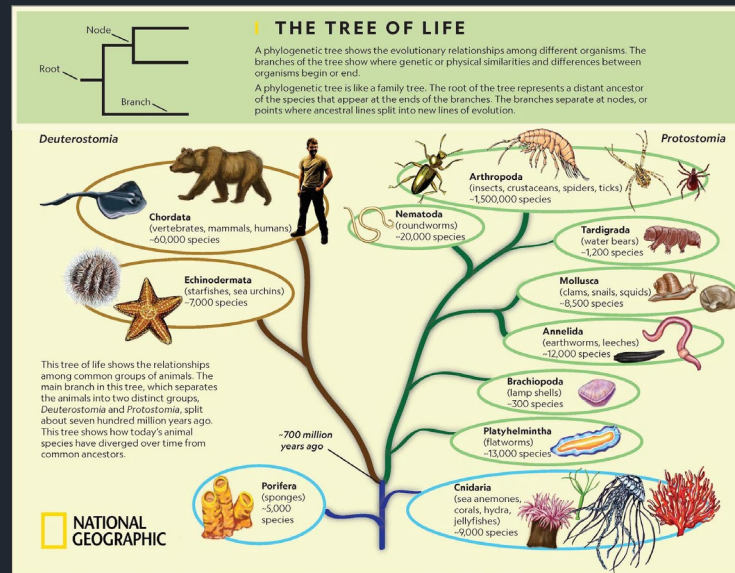
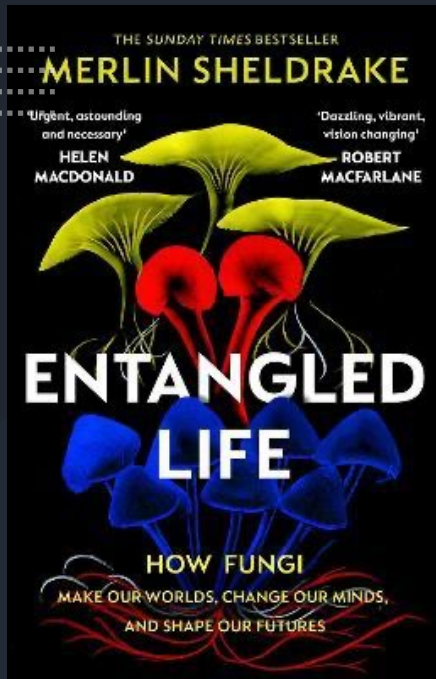
The background features a complex, abstract pattern of thin, flowing lines. The lines are primarily red and orange, with some blue and purple tones. They create a sense of movement and depth, resembling a network or a series of interconnected paths. The overall effect is dynamic and visually rich.

2. This is also an
amazing time to be
alive:
interconnectedness

Interconnection

- In the past people were convinced that planets and fortunes were linked—astrology
- And they lived much closer to the rhythms of the land
- But we know astounding things





The invisible links
have become
visible

- Awareness of the tree of life: we are all related
- Awareness of the fungi beneath the surface that make life possible
- Awareness of the way the earth's crust is full of microbes that influence life above



Pillars of Creation

And also ten or eleven
dimensions

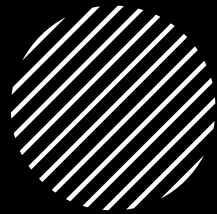
Entanglement and so on

And we know that plastic will circulate the globe and end up polluting delicate wonderful creatures like albatross and human beings.





3. Theologies:



Although the creation is not God, it shares some of the character of God, and reveals the nature of God – is a temple for God’s Spirit:

- “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”, ps24
- “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God’s hands” (Ps 19:1)
- “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – God’s eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made” (Ro 1:20).



Colossians 1:15-19

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn over all creation.**

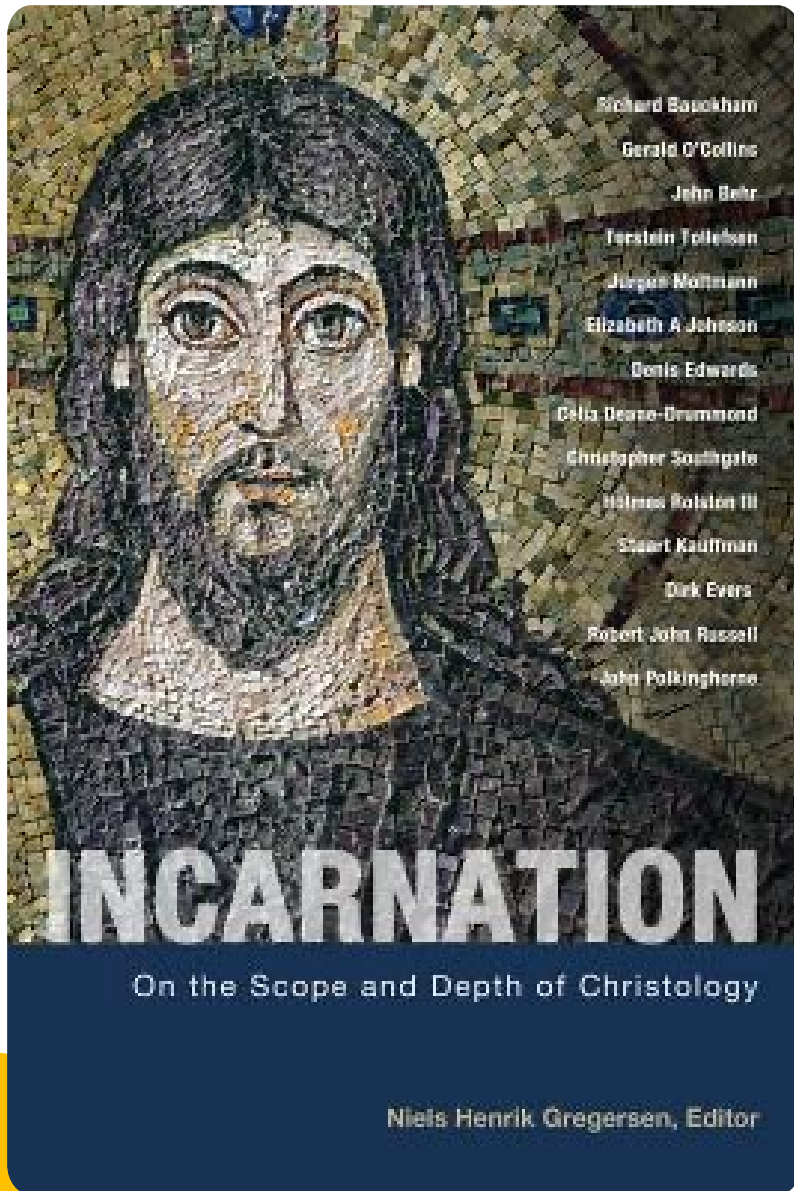
For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...

all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together...

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him





Theologies that do help

- Be clear that we have freedom to act, agency, and responsibility for the planet
- The vision of fecundity at the end of the Book of Revelation
- Deep Incarnation: Jesus takes on matter, DNA, gut bacteria as well as social status
- That what God has created together will be redeemed together

How does the church help?



Repentance

Organisation

Resilient communities

Hope

Mission to all God's creatures

Justice

Nature sacred

God will work with us

What can we all do??

- Pay attention to nature
- Pay attention to science –hidden headlines
- Think hard about how you feel de-motivated and read the Scriptures prayerfully
 - Looking for ways of being a part of the solution
- Make habits of all the practical suggestions and embed them in your church as well
- Vote
- Find some way of making your work be connected to the great enterprise of planet healing
- Become an Eco-Church



General Questions

- Arocha.org.nz
- Ecochurch.org.nz
- NZCIS.org

