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Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis

The Spiritual Practice of Caring for Creation

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Jeffrey Lamp, Senior Professor of New Testament at Oral Roberts University, offers a comprehensive reading of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (the Creed) through an ecological hermeneutical lens in his work *Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis: The Spiritual Practice of Caring for Creation*. By way of background, Lamp is professionally involved with Pentecostalism, identifies as Eastern Orthodox by confession, and specialises academically in ecological hermeneutics. For this study, Lamp draws primarily on Eastern Orthodox resources, including its liturgical spiritual tradition, with some engagement from biblical and Pentecostal studies, to provide a unique perspective that makes a substantive contribution to the maturing of Pentecostal eco-theology studies. Additionally, given the range of sources Lamp utilises, this study also has the potential to contribute to broader ecumenical dialogue—crucial given today’s environmental challenges that demand ecumenical cooperation.

Lamp organises his study around the Creed’s articles, concluding with Eastern Orthodox spiritual practices of the Eucharist and Fasting. Lamp’s ability to link these aspects across chapters,

although at times repetitive, serves to reinforce key concepts and create a cohesive and accessible overall argument. Lamp introduces “Geoliturgy” as a Christian ecological spirituality of service that benefits the earth, the place where we dwell. The people of God, empowered by the Spirit, act as benevolent co-regents and priests with Christ, to protect and serve creation, in anticipation of its ultimate fulfilment as God’s dwelling place. The opening chapter outlines the fundamentals of Lamp’s ecological hermeneutics, which provides the interpretive principles for his ecological reading of the Creed. Lamp acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting biblical texts from this perspective that are ambiguous or negative about the natural world. He advocates a reflective approach that recognises human bias, identifies with the suffering of the earth, and seeks the earth’s perspective. In essence, confronting these texts can orient us to the purpose of Scripture, which is to form us in community, by the Spirit, into the image of God.

Turning to the articles of the Creed, Chapter Two examines God the Father as Creator of heaven and earth. This is where Lamp sets out the ecological dilemma from the perspective of the intent of the Creator for the vocation of humanity. Lamp connects the mandates in Genesis 1:26–28 (dominion) and Genesis 2:15 (serve and protect), arguing that the *imago dei* of humans is to act as benevolent co-regents of a divine-human partnership. He further suggests this vocation includes a priestly function. Creation is destined to be the dwelling place of God, where God tabernacles with his people in the new heavens and new earth (Gen 3:8, Eph 2:11–22, 1 Pet 2:4–10, Rev 21:22). Human beings are then priests in God’s temple of creation, assigned to priestly service on behalf of creation—both representing creation before God and God within creation. The dilemma arises when humans abandon this priestly co-regent vocation to invert this intended order and focus on themselves, capitulating to the priority of creation in the form of the serpent’s proposal rather than

to God. In doing so, the intended triadic order of relations—that of God, humanity, and creation—is shattered. Despite this, Genesis 3:15 foreshadows God’s continued commitment to creation.

Chapter Three focuses on the Messiah Jesus as the second Adam who recapitulates humanity’s vocation in creation as faithful priestly co-regents. Drawing on Maximus the Confessor, Lamp highlights the Logos is both the means and goal of creation—communion with God. He then presents the salvific aspect of the incarnation and resurrection and its ecological implications. In his incarnation, Jesus is the same stuff of the earth as human beings, suggesting that what is accomplished for humanity through the incarnation also extends to other-than-human creation. Lamp sees this as affirmed through Jesus’s ministry that engaged with nature, healing fractured relationships. The resurrected and glorified Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to his disciples, for them to reclaim their Adamic vocation in the world. The focus of Chapter Four is the Spirit as the Giver of Life through the three acts of creation: original, ongoing and new creation. Lamp highlights Basil’s view of the inseparable action of breath and word when considering the activity of Spirit and Logos during creation. In relation to new creation, the Spirit’s creative mission is to transform creation into the dwelling place of God. It is the Spirit-endowed Jesus who recapitulates the Adamic narrative and so establishes the template for the transformative mission of God in the world. Spirit-empowered creation care by Spirit-transformed human beings is proper anticipation of the eschatological glory of creation as the dwelling place of God. It is also a sharing in the suffering of humanity and other-than-human creation in the hope of this ultimate transformation.

Chapters Five to Seven examine the final article of the Creed, focusing on ecclesiology, baptism and eschatology. Chapter Five discusses humanity’s collective vocation as God’s people, tracing this from the original human community of male and female, through to Noah, Abraham, Moses and then Christ as eternal high priest, the progenitor of a new people of God. The church is

the people of the Spirit, priestly co-regents with God, who, identifying with the travail of humanity and all creation, work to serve, protect, and bring healing to the world. Chapter Six explores baptism, where Lamp primarily focuses on the Eastern Orthodox Feast of Theophany that commemorates the baptism of Christ and the revelation of the Trinity. From this perspective, water is not only necessary for life biologically, but through being sanctified, becomes sacrament of the life-giving Spirit, a manifestation in time of the right ordering and value of creation as the dwelling place of God. Chapter Seven addresses eschatology, engaging with the contrasting passages of Romans 8:18–25 and 2 Peter 3:3–13, and the eschatology of “Dispensationalist Evangelicals.” Lamp concludes that the Genesis narrative, considering its development over time, speaks not only of the origins of creation, but of its destiny. The faithful God of Israel will realise this destiny for all creation, despite destruction that may ensue from humanity’s corrupt relation with creation. In addition, the vocation of humanity has not changed: to live faithfully in right relation with creation, in anticipation of this future hope.

Lamp concludes his study with the Eastern Orthodox spiritual practices of the Eucharist and fasting as formative, by the Spirit, for our disposition and practice of right relation with other-than-human creation. The Eucharist is the priestly offering of the bread and wine, gifts of the earth, in worship to the Creator, and the receiving through the bread and wine, empowerment for this eucharistic service in the world. It is an occasion of “communion in the Spirit,” the right ordering of God, human beings and the other-than-human creation in anticipation of the heavenly banquet. The Eastern Orthodox spiritual practice of fasting is tied to the liturgical calendar, which restricts certain foods for a period of time leading up to commemorations, and on regular weekdays. Coupled with prayer and alms giving, this practice aims to cultivate the virtues, and to shape human

beings into the true life of communion with God and rightly ordered relations with other-than-human creation.

This summary barely does justice to the complexity of issues with which Lamp grapples. Suffice to say, Lamp consistently orientates his interpretation towards the faithfulness of the trinitarian God to creation, and the vocation of humanity to be in right relation with other-than-human creation in faithfulness to this hope. A possible critique of Lamp's framing of humanity's vocation in ruler and priestly terms is that it is overly anthropocentric, potentially overlooking the unique agency of non-human creation, though he acknowledges their "silent voices" and "assisting creation in worshipping the Creator, alongside human worshippers." However, it may also be argued that Lamp's agenda is primarily motivated by a desire to correct a distorted anthropocentrism that undermines humanity's vocation, and leaves creation vulnerable, all within a broader theocentric view of creation as God's dwelling place.

In conclusion, Lamp's creative integration of ecological hermeneutics, church tradition through the Creed, and Eastern Orthodox spirituality offers a valuable and enduring resource for Pentecostal studies and ecumenical dialogue on the God, human and other-than-human creation order of relations. Additionally, it suggests spiritual communal practices that may guide Pentecostals toward a communal mission reflecting the eschatological hope that all creation will become God's dwelling place.