

Integration of Ecotheology In Tasks And Functions Religious Extension Workers on The Issue of Environmental Crisis in the North Minahasa

Alfian Revel Sumilat

Office of the Ministry of Religion of North Minahasa Regency

Abstract

Received: 5 January 2026
Revised: 23 January 2026
Accepted: 29 January 2026

The environmental crisis in Indonesia is increasingly impacting the welfare of local communities, including in North Minahasa Regency which is experiencing pressure from coastal development, increasing domestic waste, and degradation of marine ecosystems. This problem is not only ecological, but also moral and social, so it requires an approach that touches on changing public consciousness. This research aims to analyze the integration of ecotheology in the duties and functions of religious extension workers as a social transformation strategy in responding to environmental crises. The research uses an interpretive qualitative approach through a systematic literature review and analysis of the socio-ecological context of the region. The data were analyzed thematically reflective with reinforcement of social change theory, critical education, and transformative learning. The results of the study show that the integration of ecotheological values in religious counseling is able to form ecological moral awareness, encourage environmentally friendly behavior change, and strengthen community social solidarity. Counseling not only serves as spiritual education, but also as a space for faith practice through collective action such as waste management, coastal care, and cross-generational environmental education. This integration gives birth to a sustainable and contextual faith-based ecological culture. This research confirms that religious extension workers have a strategic role as agents of socio-ecological transformation, as well as that ecotheology can be the foundation of public ethics in dealing with environmental crises holistically and equitably.

Keywords: Ecotheology, Religious Extension, Environmental Crisis, Stewardship, North Minahasa.

(*) Corresponding Author:

How to Cite: Sumilat, A. (2026). Integration of Ecotheology In Tasks And Functions Religious Extension Workers on The Issue of Environmental Crisis in the North Minahasa. *International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others*, 9(1), 135-152. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/IJEIT/article/view/13797>

INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis in the last two decades has increasingly strengthened as a central issue in the global development discourse (Syahadat & Putra, 2022; Elvania, 2023). Various scientific reports show an increase in the earth's temperature, a rise in sea levels, a degradation of biodiversity, and a decrease in air and water quality. This condition not only threatens the stability of ecosystems, but also the sustainability of human life, especially in developing countries that have a high dependence on natural resources. In this context, Indonesia, as an archipelagic country with great ecological wealth, faces serious pressure in the form of massive deforestation, water pollution, exploitation of natural resources, waste problems, and increasing frequency of ecological disasters (Damiti et al., 2025). In response to this crisis, the government has formulated various environmental policies through regulations, rehabilitation programs, and behavior change campaigns. However, its effectiveness is often hampered by the dominance of short-term economic orientation and low public collective awareness. Nature is still treated as

a commodity for development, not as a life system that must be maintained. This anthropocentric development pattern encourages overexploitation, accelerates environmental degradation, and increases the risk of ecological disasters that are most severe felt by vulnerable social groups (Goswami, 2024).

In the perspective of creation theology, the ecological crisis reflects man's failure to carry out his divine mandate as stewards of the earth (Kaluku et al., 2025). Human power over nature is not the legitimacy to exploit it, but the responsibility to maintain and maintain the sustainability of creation. When man's relationship with nature turns dominative and destructive, what occurs is not only the destruction of ecosystems, but also moral and spiritual crises that undermine the harmony between God, humans, and all of creation (Kurniawaty et al., 2024). Thus, environmental issues cannot be separated from the dimensions of ethics and faith that shape the way humans view nature. In addition to spiritual and cultural factors, the environmental crisis is also influenced by an economic-political structure that prioritizes growth over ecological justice. Loose policies on extractive industries, weak enforcement of environmental laws, and corrupt practices make the exploitation of natural resources systematic and often administratively legalized even though it has an ecologically damaging impact (Haward, 2021). As a result, environmental degradation goes hand in hand with increasing social inequality, resource-based conflicts, and the economic vulnerability of local communities.

The impact of the ecological crisis is increasingly evident at the local level, including in North Minahasa Regency which is experiencing an acceleration of development through settlement expansion, tourism sector development, and intensification of the use of coastal areas (Pelengkahu et al., 2021). Although it opens up economic opportunities, this dynamic also triggers an increase in the volume of waste, reduced vegetation cover, water pollution, and threats to the sustainability of marine ecosystems. In this context, coastal communities and weak economic groups are the most affected, so the environmental crisis in this region also represents a social justice issue (Lolangion et al., 2021). In a religious society, religion has a strategic potential in shaping ecological consciousness. Religious teachings not only regulate human relations with God and others, but also with all creation (Elza, 2025). Ecotheology exists as an approach that affirms that the earth belongs to God and that humans are responsible for caring for it as a concrete form of faith (Runtuwene, 2025). This paradigm shifts the logic of dominance towards the logic of maintenance, ecological solidarity, and the sustainability of life. However, the development of studies on environmental and ecological crises is still dominated by normative-conceptual reflections. Many studies emphasize theological aspects theoretically without delving into their implementation in the practice of community life. On the other hand, the study of religious extension workers generally focuses on the moral and spiritual development of the ummah, but rarely relates it specifically to the formation of ecological ethics. Until now, there is still limited empirical research that integrates the perspective of ecotheology with the practice of religious counseling, especially in the context of areas experiencing development pressure such as North Minahasa Regency.

As strategic actors at the grassroots level, religious extension workers interact directly with the community through lectures, mentoring, and daily life consultations. This space opens up great opportunities to transform the values of

faith into a concrete and sustainable ecological awareness. Without the integration of theological reflection and social praxis, this role has the potential to not be optimally utilized in responding to an increasingly complex environmental crisis. Based on this reality, this research is important to examine how the concept of ecotheology can be actualized through the role of religious extension workers in building community ecological awareness and practices. The integration between theological reflection and the practice of counseling is expected to strengthen the moral basis of the faith-based environmental movement, so that environmental conservation efforts do not only depend on technical policies, but also on the continuous transformation of spiritual consciousness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a focus on contextual-theological analysis to understand the integration of ecotheology in religious counseling practices in response to the environmental crisis in North Minahasa Regency (Khilmiyah, 2025). This approach was chosen because ecological crises are not only a physical environmental problem, but are closely related to the construction of values, moral awareness, and the transformation of social behavior shaped by religious belief systems. Therefore, this study places ecological reality as a social-spiritual phenomenon that needs to be read in depth through theological reflection and social dynamics of society. The research design combines a systematic literature review with social context analysis as a methodological unit. Literature review was conducted on works of ecological theology, Christian environmental ethics, and the study of social change based on religious values to build a conceptual framework for research. The literature was selected selectively based on its thematic relevance and theoretical contribution in explaining the relationship between faith, public ethics, and social transformation. Through this approach, ecotheology is understood not just as a normative reflection, but as a praxis paradigm that has the potential to change the life of the community. The analysis of the social context is directed at the realities of development and ecological problems in North Minahasa, including coastal degradation, domestic waste problems, and their impact on the welfare of local communities. Contextual data was obtained through the study of regional development planning documents, environmental reports, and scientific publications that discuss the socio-ecological dynamics of coastal areas. This approach allows research to connect theological reflection with empirical conditions both contextually and applicatively.

The data analysis process was carried out through reflective thematic analysis by identifying the main patterns that emerged from the literature and social context, such as the theological meaning of nature, the role of religious extension workers as agents of change, and the mechanism of transformation of faith-based ecological behavior. The themes are then integrated to build a conceptual model of ecotheological counseling that emphasizes consciousness change, value internalization, and sustainable social practices. The research interpretation framework is enriched by social change theory that emphasizes value shifts as a motor of societal transformation. Religious ethics is understood as the force that shapes the orientation of social life as stated by Max Weber who shows how religious beliefs are able to shape the structure of economic and social behavior.

The process of critical awareness of the reality of ecological injustice is analyzed through the transformative educational perspective of Paulo Freire that emphasizes reflective awareness as the foundation of social change. Meanwhile, the mechanism of profound perspective change is understood through the transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow, which asserts that sustainable change occurs when individuals critically reconstruct the meaning of their life experiences. The validity of the research is maintained through conceptual triangulation between theological literature, social studies, and local contextual data, as well as through interpretive consistency in relating faith reflection to empirical reality. With this approach, the research not only produces a normative exposition of ecotheology, but builds an analytical understanding of religious counseling as an arena of faith-based socio-ecological transformation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Ecotheology: Its Definition, Development, and Relevance

Ecotheology is a reflection of faith that places the relationship between God, humans, and nature in the light of God's creation and salvation (Rahman, 2025). This perspective was born from the theological realization that the earth is not just a human living space, but part of the communion of all creations that equally stand before the Creator. Nature is not placed as an object of exploitation, but as a fellow creature who has intrinsic value in God's plan. This awareness has been gaining strength since the second half of the 20th century when the world began to face the serious impacts of global environmental crises, such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change (Kusuma et al., 2023). This situation has prompted many theologians to reread faith traditions that were previously too anthropocentric and less sensitive to the sustainability of creation.

In the context of religious praxis, ecotheology develops as a complete and operational perspective. Through the book *Ecotheology: Practicing Faith, Preserving the Environment*, published by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2025), it is emphasized that caring for the earth is not only a social responsibility, but an integral part of faith and worship. Ecotheology is built on three main pillars that are interconnected, namely faith as a spiritual awareness that nature is God's mandate, science as the basis for a rational understanding of the ecological crisis, and charity as a concrete action to maintain environmental sustainability (Humaedi et al., 2025). Without the integration of the three, ecological concern risks stopping at moral discourse without any real transformation in daily life. The development of ecotheology in Indonesia shows a significant shift from mere theological reflection to the framework of social movements and even interfaith moral policies. In the midst of the reality of the climate crisis, forest destruction, marine pollution, and massive exploitation of natural resources, ecotheology is present as an ethical compass that leads believers to build a new relationship with nature (Humaedi et al., 2025). The paradigm of

dominance is replaced by responsibility, exploitation by care, and short-term interests by the sustainability of future generations. Thus, ecotheology is not only theologically relevant, but also strategic in shaping the collective awareness that protecting the earth is a spiritual calling as well as a necessity of civilization.

In this framework, nature is understood to have intrinsic value, not just use value. Forests, seas, soils, and all living things are valued as fellow creatures. Therefore, the responsibility of maintaining the environment cannot be placed as an additional agenda, but as part of spirituality itself. Ecotheology rejects any form of religious legitimacy that justifies the exploitation of nature for the sake of profit alone (Trivonia Hilde Febrianti, 2025). In the course of his thoughts, various emphasis emerged that enriched the ecotheological perspective. There is an approach that sees humans as stewards who are entrusted with managing the earth wisely. There is also a cosmic view that places all creation as part of God's work of salvation, so that salvation not only touches man but also the universe. In addition, there is growing awareness of ecological justice which highlights that environmental damage almost always impacts the poor and vulnerable the hardest. What these approaches have in common is a recognition of the sacredness of creation, a critique of a consumptive lifestyle, and an invitation to real ecological repentance in public action.

In the academic world, a number of thinkers have made important contributions to the development of ecotheology. Sallie McFague introduced the image of the world as the body of God to affirm the Creator's closeness to creation (Narong, 2023). Leonardo Boff spoke of the earth as a common home that demands universal solidarity (Rozzi, 2023). James Nash emphasizes that environmental ethics are a direct consequence of the Christian faith (Yonts, 2021). These ideas show that ecotheology is not a temporary trend, but rather part of the church's effort to read the signs of the times. In the context of Indonesia, where people have high religious sensitivity, a faith-based approach has great influence. Churches and religious institutions began to include environmental issues in people's education, waste reduction campaigns, and reforestation movements. However, the integration between teachings and daily practice still needs strengthening. Ecotheology is able to bridge the language of faith with the need for nature conservation so that ecological action is seen as a religious calling, not just a government program.

In the context of North Minahasa, the community's ties with churches and religious leaders are very strong, so messages about the environment will be easier to accept when conveyed in a spiritual framework. Religious extension workers have a great opportunity to build collective awareness about the threat of coastal damage, waste problems, and the importance of protecting water resources. When ecological concern is understood as a form of obedience to God, people's motivation becomes more profound. The mandate to cultivate and maintain a garden in Genesis 2:15 affirms man's responsibility to the earth. Psalm 24:1 reminds us that the world

belongs to God, while the law on the land sabbath shows that nature also needs a time of restoration. In the New Testament, Christ is placed at the center of all creation, and it is portrayed that the universe is also groaning for renewal, Romans 8:22 describes the entire creation suffering from the damage caused by human sin. This Scriptural testimony shows that God's concern goes beyond man and encompasses the entire cosmos. If the earth really belongs to God, then the environmental crisis can be understood as a spiritual crisis. The destruction of nature reflects the unhealthy relationship between man and the Creator. The root of the problem lies in a life orientation that pursues short-term gains without considering moral responsibility. Therefore, ecological repentance demands a change of heart and lifestyle, from reducing waste to using resources wisely and solidarity with those most affected by climate change.

When faith is truly the basis of action, concern for the environment no longer feels like a burden from the outside. It is transformed into an inner calling born of the awareness of the relationship with God and with all creation. From this can emerge a new culture that values sustainability, strengthens social solidarity, and resists the pace of natural exploitation. If the earth is understood to belong to God, then environmental damage reflects a disturbance in man's relationship with the Creator. The root of the problem lies in a life orientation that puts short-term gains above moral responsibility. Ecological repentance is an important term that describes the need for a change of heart, mind, and action. This conversion does not stop at confession, but demands a lifestyle transformation, namely waste reduction, wise use of energy, and solidarity with vulnerable groups most affected by the climate crisis.

B. Duties and Functions of Religious Extension Workers in the Framework of Ecotheology-Based Social Change

Religious extension workers in the context of contemporary society can no longer be reduced to being the presenters of normative teachings or implementers of religious ceremonial activities only. Religious extension workers occupy a strategic position as agents of social transformation who work directly on the formation of values, moral awareness, and community life orientation. The informative-educational, consultative, and advocacy functions make religious counseling an instrument of change that touches the deepest roots of social life, namely the way humans view God, others, and the created nature. In the reality of an increasingly real environmental crisis, ranging from coastal damage, increasing volume of waste, water source pollution, to the degradation of agricultural land, this role acquires new urgency when it is associated with the theological mandate of humans as stewards of creation. Religious counseling no longer talks about faith in the abstract, but connects it directly to ecological issues that affect the survival of the community.

This is clear in the 2026 counseling work plan which is systematically prepared through the annual service calendar. In it, environmental issues are placed as a strategic theme along with religious moderation, digital ethics, nationalism, and family resilience. This approach shows that ecotheology is not a fringe issue, but part of a structured social change agenda. Counseling is carried out on an ongoing basis through a neat administrative cycle, accountable monthly reporting, and reflective evaluation at the end of the year to assess the impact of the transformation that occurs.



Image 1 Devotional Calendar 2026

More concretely, ecotheological counseling is translated into field programs that touch the community directly. The counseling plan with the theme "Ecotheology: Nurturing Creation as a Form of Faith", for example, does not stop at theological lectures, but is designed through weekly stages such as an introduction to the basics of ecotheology, reconstruction of the theological understanding of humans as stewards of the earth, to the implementation of spiritual ethics in daily life practices. The faithful are invited to see that caring for the environment is not an additional activity, but a concrete expression of faith.



Image 2 Work Program Plan

In the framework of social change theory, the role of religious extension workers can be understood through the concept of religious ethics as a motor for community transformation. Ghosh (2022) in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of*

Capitalism shows that religious values are able to shape life orientation, work patterns, and social structures broadly. The ethics of faith do not stop at the worship space, but flow into daily economic and social practices. If religious values are able to encourage the birth of a modern economic system, then ecotheological values also have the potential to form a new ethos that respects environmental sustainability. In the context of religious counseling, this principle also works in real terms. When the ummah or society understands that littering, destroying mangroves, or overexploiting the sea is a form of disobedience to faith, then a change in behavior occurs from within moral awareness, not because of fear of sanctions. Religious extension workers play a role in instilling a new ecological ethos, namely nature as God's mandate that must be maintained for the sustainability of generations.

This transformational approach is emphasized by the critical education theory of Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Bello (2023) emphasizes that social change is born through a process of critical awareness, which is when people are aware of the relationship between their suffering and the structures of injustice that surround it. In the practice of ecotheological counseling, the people are not only invited to pray for the environment, but are guided to read reality critically. Repeated flooding, damage to coral reefs, or reduced crop yields are not understood as "natural destiny", but rather as a consequence of unjust and unsustainable patterns of exploitation. Through group discussions, field dialogues, and faith reflection, religious extension workers open up awareness that ecological crises are moral and structural problems. This awareness drives a change from passive to active participation. The people began to be involved in actions to maintain environmental cleanliness, tree planting, water source protection, and social advocacy at the community level. This is a form of social change born from critical awareness, not just formal compliance. A deeper transformation is explained by the transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow. In the study of Thamrin et al. (2026), Mezirow asserts that sustainable change occurs when individuals experience a fundamental shift in perspective through critical reflection on life experiences. Information alone is not enough because what is needed is a reinterpretation of reality that gives birth to new commitments.

In ecotheology-based religious counseling, real experiences of the community such as drought, damage to coconut plantations, or coastal pollution are used as material for theological reflection. Extension workers relate that reality to the biblical mandate to "cultivate and maintain" the earth. From this process, people who previously saw nature as a mere economic source began to view it as God's creation that has spiritual value. This paradigm shift is what gives birth to a consistently environmentally friendly lifestyle. The strength of the counseling approach is also seen in the methods used. Counseling does not only rely on one-way lectures, but also combines dialogical discussions, personal consultations, field

visits, and the use of digital media such as educational videos and online meetings. The goals of the formation include youth, women, children, and interfaith communities, showing that ecotheology is directed towards a shared social ethic, not just an internal discourse of the church.

The advocacy function of religious extension workers is further expanding the impact of change. Extension workers not only shape individual awareness, but encourage social solidarity to protect the environment as a legacy for future generations. This principle of intergenerational justice and ecological solidarity is in line with the moral message of Mahatma Gandhi that the world is enough to meet human needs, but not to greed (Pamungkas et al., 2025). This spirit emphasizes that the environmental crisis is not a matter of lack of resources, but an ethical failure. The integration between theological foundations, theories of social change, and concrete counseling practices shows that religious extension workers work at the level of long-term cultural transformation. The informative-educational function builds a solid environmental theology, the consultative function accompanies daily behavior changes, and the advocacy function mobilizes collective action for ecological justice. When ecotheological values are successfully internalized, a new social ethics is formed, namely destroying the environment is understood as a moral violation, while caring for nature becomes an expression of piety in life. This change is much more powerful than formal regulation, because it is rooted in the consciousness of faith that lives in the community.

Thus, religious extension workers are not only implementers of religious programs, but architects of ecological awareness of the community. Supported by a strong theological foundation and tested theories of social change ranging from Ghosh's religious ethics, Freire's critical awareness, to Mezirow's transformative learning, ecotheology-based religious counseling has real potential as a transformative force in responding to environmental crises in a sustainable, contextual, and direct impact on the social life of the people.

C. Environmental and Development Context in North Minahasa

North Minahasa is not just the name of an administrative region in North Sulawesi, North Minahasa is the living space of thousands of families who every day grapple with the reality of development and rapid environmental change. With an area of about 1,059 km² and an estimated population of 231 thousand people in 2023, this district shows a real population growth trend. This growth is driving the expansion of settlements, public facilities, and infrastructure, which unfortunately goes hand in hand with increasingly complex environmental problems. The growth of this residential area has direct implications for the increase in the volume of domestic waste. Every household now produces waste that accumulates without a strong management system that is evenly distributed throughout the sub-district. The efforts of the local government contained in the medium-term development

planning document (RPJMD 2021-2026) do target a reduction in the volume of waste by up to ten percent, but its realization still faces real obstacles in the field, especially in terms of waste treatment facilities and active community involvement. The impact of waste production that has not been handled properly is not only seen on land, but also spreads to coastal areas. Popular beaches such as Tasik Ria *Beach* and the waters of Likupang show a lot of plastic and rubber debris blending with the sand and waves. Monitoring at several coastal points revealed that more than half of the garbage identified on the coastline is plastic, which is clearly not only a matter of aesthetics but of the health of the marine ecosystem itself.

North Minahasa actually has large environmental capital such as thousands of hectares of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangroves that function as natural buffers against abrasion, provide habitat for marine life, and be the main pillar for the livelihoods of coastal communities (Ganda et al., 2021). Scattered coral reefs, vast seagrass meadows, and mangrove areas scattered in a number of coastal villages should be ecological and economic strengths. However, in some areas such as Nain Island, the mangrove area is still small at only about 4.4 ha, meaning that the natural capacity of the area to maintain coastal stability is still very limited. The pressure on these ecosystems is not just about the aesthetics of the eroded environment, but about the livelihoods of people who depend on the sea and coasts for their livelihoods. Data shows nearly 9,500 active fishermen spread across sub-districts such as Kema, Wori, and Likupang, with incomes that are often still below regional wage standards. When marine health declines due to garbage accumulation and habitat degradation, it means that the quality of fish catches decreases, meaning that family income also weakens. This is a very real cause-and-effect relationship, not just an idealistic narrative.

The response of the community and local governments has begun to emerge, although it is not large enough. For example, initiatives to plant thousands of mangrove seedlings in coastal villages are carried out to improve ecological capacity while opening up conservation-based economic opportunities. There is also an educational program to reduce single-use plastics in tourist areas, as an initial effort to build more environmentally friendly living practices. In this context, a faith-based moral approach becomes not just a complement, but a strategic element in building collective consciousness. Awareness of responsibility for the environment cannot be regulated only through government regulations or technical programs, it needs to be instilled in the values of community life. Houses of worship have great potential to become centers for ecological education, namely places where the concepts of *stewardship* (creation management), social responsibility, and ecological solidarity can be discussed together, experienced together, and applied in real life (Munawar-Rachman, 2024). For example, churches or mosques that are places where communities gather can open environmental discussion rooms, initiate coastal clean-up activities or waste sorting at the

congregation/village level, or become the motor of single-use plastic reduction campaigns. It is not just a normative appeal, but real action that is directly related to the welfare of our own neighbors such as fishermen, seafarers, small traders who live off marine and coastal products.

The reality of development in North Minahasa is real where the dynamics of settlements, a growing economy, but also ecological pressures that lead to challenges for the welfare of coastal communities. The answer is not just technical. It needs an integration between data, concrete actions, and strong moral values, a collective awareness that the environment is not an externality, but a basis of life that needs to be cared for together.

D. An Ecotheology Integration Model in Extension

The integration of ecotheology in religious counseling cannot be understood as an addition to the environmental theme in the guidance material alone, but as a transformation of the way counseling itself works. Ecotheology is a framework of values that animates the entire process of fostering the ummah, starting from the formation of faith awareness, the processing of social reality, to the birth of sustainable ecological actions. In field practice, this integration develops as a gradual process that is lively, contextual, and based on the real experience of the community. The integration process starts from a face-to-face space with the fostered group. In these meetings, counseling is not structured as normative lectures, but as a reflective dialogue between faith and the ecological reality experienced by the people. The environmental crisis is not talked about globally and abstractly, but is read through local experiences such as degraded coastal conditions, piles of household waste, reduced garden yields, polluted water, and weather changes that affect livelihoods. This reality is then associated with man's theological mandate as stewards of creation. From this, a new awareness is formed that environmental damage is not just a technical or natural problem, but a moral and spiritual problem born from the human lifestyle. This contextual reflection of faith is slowly shifting the perspective of the people. Nature is no longer understood as an economic source that is free to be exploited, but as God's creation that has sacred value and must be maintained for the sustainability of life (Kurniawaty et al., 2024). This change in perspective is the foundation of ecotheology-based social transformation. Without this shift in awareness, any environmental program will only be a momentary activity with no long-term impact. The consciousness that grows in the reflective space is then directed to concrete action through the direct involvement of the people in faith-based ecological action.

The counseling does not stop at discussions, but moves on concrete practices such as tree planting, environmental community service, simple waste management, and community green space care. Every action is always accompanied by a theological meaning, namely caring for the earth as a form of

social worship and spiritual responsibility. Through this direct involvement, the people not only understand environmental concern as a concept, but experience it as a daily practice of faith. Collective action builds community solidarity, creates new ecological habits, and strengthens a sense of shared responsibility for the environment. At this stage, ecotheology changes from a religious discourse to a social culture that begins to take root in community life. To maintain the continuity of this transformation, counseling is expanded to the digital space through social media and educational content. Faith reflection materials about the environment, documentation of field actions, invitations to ecological concern, and practical education are disseminated regularly. This approach reinforces the presence of ecotheological values in the daily lives of the people, beyond the boundaries of physical encounters. Digital media is not only a means of communication, but a space for the formation of sustainable moral consciousness that expands the reach of social transformation.

This integration is further deepened through creative ecological education for children and adolescents. Through tree planting activities, educational games, faith stories about God's creation, to small projects to protect the environment around the house, the value of caring is instilled from an early age. This approach shapes long-term ecological habits and prepares a generation that sees faith and environmental responsibility as one living unit. Overall, the model of integrating ecotheology in counseling moves as a multi-layered transformation process, namely theological awareness forms new perspectives, perspectives give birth to real actions, repeated actions build social habits, and consistent habits create community ecological culture. This is what makes the performance of counseling not symbolic, but real, measurable, and has a direct impact on social life and the environment. This model shows that religious counseling can be a space for concrete faith-based social change. It not only touches the spiritual dimension of the individual, but forms a structure of collective consciousness that influences long-term social behavior. Ecotheology, in this framework, is not just a theological approach, but a foundation of public ethics that leads society to a more just, sustainable, and responsible life for creation.



Image 3 Face-to-Face Fostered Groups (Interfaith Communities)



Image 4 Face-to-Face Foster Groups (Christian Youth & Youth)



Image 5 Tree Planting



Image 6 Counseling Guidance Through Social Media

E. The Impact of Integration on Community Transformation

The integration of ecotheology in religious life, education, counseling, and public policy has a real transformative impact because it does not stop at the level of moral discourse, but changes the way of view, lifestyle, and social practices of believers towards the environment. Faith is combined with a scientific understanding of the ecological crisis and manifested in concrete actions, resulting in a collective consciousness to live more responsible, sustainable, and ecologically just lives (Humaedi et al., 2025). This transformation can be seen in changes in social behavior such as community-based waste management, reducing excessive consumption, revitalizing local wisdom in caring for nature, and interfaith collaboration in protecting the environment. Ecotheology thus not only enriches the reflection of faith, but also becomes a motor of social change that encourages society to move towards a sustainable lifestyle for the sake of future generations. This impact is even stronger when ecotheology is systematically integrated into the task of religious counseling. The counseling process is no longer just about conveying normative knowledge, but reshaping the way people interpret nature, development, and moral responsibility as believers. When faith is constantly associated with human relations with creation, there is a fundamental paradigm shift from nature as an object of exploitation to nature as a living space entrusted by God to maintain (Gili Leo, 2025). This transformation takes place gradually but profoundly, forming cultural changes that affect daily habits, social norms, and community life orientation. In the long run, the integration of ecotheology through religious counseling has the potential to create a society that is not only ritually

religious, but also ecological in its social praxis of living faith, critical of environmental damage, and actively caring for the earth as part of a spiritual vocation.

In the context of North Minahasa, this transformation has a very real impact. People who have been accustomed to throwing household waste directly into waterways, rivers or the sea are beginning to understand that this action is not just a matter of cleanliness, but a matter of social sin that damages the lives of others. When religious extension workers associate environmental pollution with the plight of fishermen, the destruction of coral reefs, and declining fish catches, the people begin to see a concrete cause-and-effect relationship between their daily behavior and the economic crisis of coastal families. This awareness encourages changes in collective behavior, such as community-based waste management, coastal community service, and the reduction of single-use plastics in the congregation. More than that, the integration of ecotheology fosters an increasingly strong sense of social responsibility. Concern for the environment is no longer understood as a matter of government or activists, but as the responsibility of the faith of the entire community. The church and religious groups changed their function from just a place of worship to a center of social mobilization. Beach cleanup activities, mangrove planting, children's education about waste, and public discussions about the impact of coastal development began to emerge as concrete expressions of faith. At this point, faith no longer stops at the altar, but descends directly to the sands of the beaches, rivers, and living spaces of the community. Another important impact is the strengthening of social solidarity across groups. The environmental crisis shows that it is not the development elite who suffer the most, but the small fishermen, coastal workers, and poor families. When religious counseling raises this issue as a matter of ecological justice, a collective empathy grows that encourages mutually supportive actions. Society no longer sees environmental degradation as a natural fate, but as a structural injustice that must be fought together through behavioral change and social pressure on exploitative practices.

Transformation is also seen in people's consumption patterns and life orientation. Awareness of ecological faith encourages people to be more critical of extravagant lifestyles, excessive use of plastics, and development practices that damage the environment. There is a tendency to choose local products, reuse used goods, and reduce household waste. Although it looks simple, these micro-changes have a macro impact when done collectively. The volume of waste decreases, the pressure on the environment is reduced, and the quality of life of the community is gradually improving. In the long run, the integration of ecotheology contributes to the birth of a faith-based ecological culture. This culture is reflected in daily habits, social norms, and the way the community educates the younger generation. Children who grow up in a church environment that actively campaigns for environmental care will carry these values into their school, socializing, and adult

lives. Concern for nature is part of religious identity, not just a momentary trend. This is a much stronger foundation of social sustainability than short-term environmental projects. In addition to cultural change, this integration also strengthens community participation in environmental monitoring. People who already have faith-based ecological awareness tend to be more courageous in voicing their rejection of careless waste disposal, destruction of mangroves, or development that damages the coast. Religious extension workers act as moral mediators who provide ethical legitimacy for social courage. Thus, transformation does not only occur at the personal level, but also penetrates into the local socio-political realm through community-based advocacy. Overall, the impact of integrating ecotheology in religious counseling forms this multidimensional changes such as changes in perspective, daily behavior, social solidarity, consumption patterns, and public participation in protecting the environment. Ecological concern is no longer present as an external burden or temporary program, but rather as an inner calling born of faith. From this emerged a new culture that values sustainability, rejects overexploitation, and places human and natural welfare as an inseparable unit.

CONCLUSION

The environmental crisis is not just a technical development problem, but a moral, spiritual, and social problem that touches the core of people's lives. Ecotheology exists as a strategic bridge between faith and ecological reality, dismantling the old perspective that places nature as an object of exploitation, and replacing it with an understanding that the earth is God's creation that must be cared for as a sacred mandate. When faith is read contextually, ecological responsibility no longer feels like an external demand, but rather as an inner calling rooted in religious consciousness. The role of religious extension workers has proven to be very crucial in this transformation process. Through an educational, reflective, and advocacy approach, religious counseling is able to drive change from the level of theological awareness to concrete social practices. Ecological integration does not stop at discourse, but is embodied in community actions such as waste management, coastal care, tree planting, and cross-generational ecological education. This is a form of faith that lives, a faith that descends to reality, touching the land, the sea, and the daily life of the people.

In the context of North Minahasa, where development is moving rapidly while ecological pressures are becoming more real, a faith-based approach has become particularly relevant. Environmental data and social realities show that natural destruction has a direct impact on the well-being of coastal communities and vulnerable groups. Therefore, change does not rely enough on government regulations or technical programs alone. A cultural transformation is needed that instills the value of ecological concern as a new social norm and the religious space has great power to shape it. The ecotheology integration model in counseling shows a systematic process of change, namely reflection on faith to form new perspectives, perspectives that give birth to real actions, repeated actions that build habits, and

habits that create an ecological culture of the community. This transformation is in line with the theory of social change that emphasizes the shift of consciousness as the foundation of sustainable change, as seen in Paulo Freire's thinking on critical awareness and Jack Mezirow's on paradigm shift through experiential reflection. Even Mahatma Gandhi's universal ethical message of greed and ecological justice finds its relevance in faith-based community practices. Overall, the integration of ecotheology in religious counseling is proving to be a real transformative force. He changed the way of thinking, daily behavior, social solidarity, and public participation in protecting the environment. Ecological concern is no longer a momentary project, but part of the religious identity and culture of people's lives. If developed consistently, this approach has the potential to produce a community of believers who are not only devout in ritual, but also responsible for caring for the earth as a common home.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bello, M. B. (2023). An understanding of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 15(1), 225–231. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29905>
- Davis, A. (2021). Pentecostal approaches to ecotheology: Reviewing the literature. *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, 22(1), 4–33. <https://aps-journal.com/index.php/APS/article/view/9572>
- Elvania, N. C. (2023). Global environmental issues (E. Damayanti, Ed.). CV Widina Media.
- Elza, P. (2025). The role of religion in building ecological awareness. *Journal of Religion and Humanities*, 1, 1–27.
- Ganda, J., Giroth, L. G. J., Hamenda, B., & Warouw, F. F. (2021). Typology of community participation in the development of the Likupang Special Economic Zone (SEZ) through the smart environment tourism approach. *Journal of International Conference Proceedings*, 4(2), 649–655.
- Ghosh, P. (2022). The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1904–5/1920). In S. Turner (Ed.), *The Routledge international handbook on Max Weber* (pp. 145–157). Routledge.
- Gili Leo, O. (2025). Green theology in the midst of a wounded world: A paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. *Academics: Student Scientific Journal*, 24(2), 172–183. <https://doi.org/10.31385/jakad.v24i2.168>
- Goswami, D. (2024). Addressing the challenge of overexploitation of natural resources in pursuit of development. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 65–67. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i3.276>
- Haward, A. S. (2021). Integral ecology: Alternatives in the environmental crisis. *MELINTAS: An International Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 37(2), 152–176. <https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v37i2.6295>
- Humaedi, M. A., Rachman, B. M., Testriono, Nugroho, A. S., & Sebayang, D. A. B. (2025). *Ecotheology: Practicing faith, preserving the environment. Religious Moderation and Human Resources Development Agency, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.*

- Kaluku, S. M., Poluan, A. R., & Mawikere, M. C. S. (2025). Economics as a theological paradigm in environmental conservation. *Didaskalia: Journal of Christian Religious Education*, 6(1), 1–14.
- Khilmiyah, A. (2016). *Qualitative research methods*. Blue Ocean. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=sVvDEAAAQBAJ>
- Kurniawaty, E., Andi, L. B. R. L., Tanggulungan, A., & Sari, Y. T. (2024). Theology of creation and environmental responsibility: A Christian approach to the ecological crisis. *Humanities: Journal of Humanities, Social and Business*, 2(5), 1494–1505.
- Kusuma, K., Widodo, P., & Wilopo, W. (2023). A religiosity approach to prevent the threat of environmental damage. *Nusantara: Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(7), 3482–3492. <https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v10i7.2023.3482-3492>
- Lolangion, F., Runturambi, M. C., & Kawuwung, J. (2021). Examining anthropocentrism in responding to environmental crises from the perspective of creation theology. *Tumou Tou*, 8(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.51667/tt.v8i1.469>
- Munawar-Rachman, B. (2024). Religious and ecological dialogue. *Journal of Civilization*, 4(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.51353/jpb.v4i1.1092>
- Narong, Y. F. (2023). The Universe as the Body of God: An Analysis of Eco-Theologian Sallie McFague's Thought. *Deconstruction*, 9(4), 45–57. <https://doi.org/10.54154/dekonstruksi.v9i04.190>
- Pamungkas, D. D., Firmansyah, W., Guswara, A. M., & Halilintar, I. S. (2025). The integration of Sarvodaya Mahatma Gandhi's values in resolving ecological conflicts due to free lunch waste in Banyumas. *Journal of Mana Management*, 6(3), 165–173. <https://doi.org/10.33648/jtm.v6i3.1372>
- Pelengkahu, S. S., Kindangen, P., & Walewangko, E. N. (2021). Analysis of the influence of the agricultural sector on economic growth in North Sulawesi Province. *Journal of Regional Economic and Financial Development*, 22(2).
- Pereira, M. T., & Saraiva, I. Z. (n.d.). The cosmology of transformation as a new ethical-environmental paradigm in Leonardo Boff. <https://doi.org/10.56238/tfisdwv1-100>
- Rahman, M. H. (2025). Qualitative data analysis techniques. In *qualitative research methods* (p. 84).
- Rahmawati Damiti, A., Pakaya, P., Prasetyo, M. H., Baderan, D. W. K., & Utina, R. (2025). Stability of Indonesia's forest ecosystems in the face of deforestation and environmental degradation: A literature review. *Botany: Publications of Plant Science and Agribusiness*, 2(2), 176–188. <https://doi.org/10.62951/botani.v2i2.343>
- Rozzi, R. (2023). Man is humus: Boff's panentheistic ecotheological analysis within the framework of biocultural ethics. In L. Valera (Ed.), *Pantheism and ecology* (Vol. 6). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-40040-7_25
- Runtuwene, H. C. M. (2025). Ecotheology: Integrating faith, creation care, and contextual practice in Indonesian Protestant congregations. *Educatio Christi*, 6(1), 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.70796/educatio-christi.v6i1.215>
- Scott, R. M., & Son, R. I. S. (2022). Global warming and environmental damage: Is it still an important issue in Indonesia? *Envirotek: Scientific Journal of*

- Environmental Engineering, 14(1), 43–50.
<https://doi.org/10.33005/envirotek.v14i1.179>
- Thamrin, H., Sukmana, O., & Damanik, F. H. S. (2026). The application of Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory in adult education for the development of reflective awareness. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 8(1), 60–71.
- Trivonia Hilde Febrianti. (2025). Ecotheology in the midst of a global crisis: Finding hope in faith and nature. *Academics: Student Scientific Journal*, 24(2), 128–146. <https://doi.org/10.31385/jakad.v24i2.120>
- Yonts, T. (2021). Closing a triumphalist loophole: Integrating Ronald Nash's Christian realism within inaugurated kingdom theology (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.