

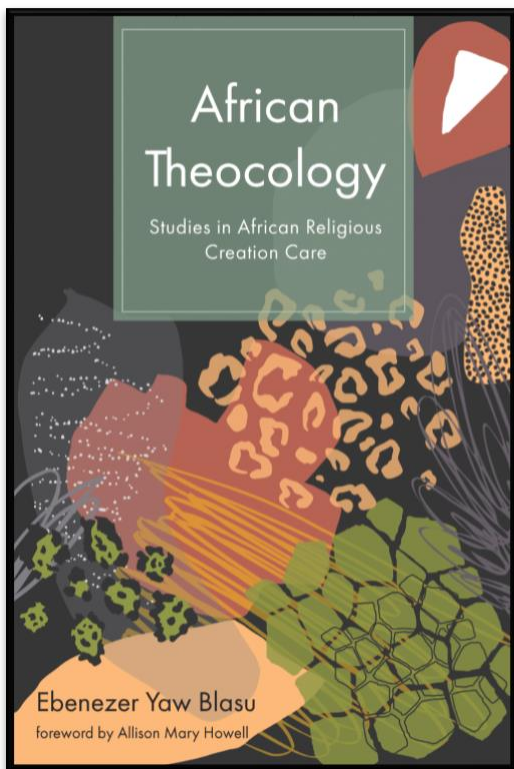
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact Information:

Ebenezer Yaw Blasu
eyblasu@gmail.com
+233 20 825 4600

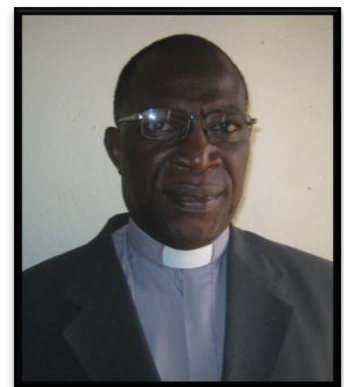
African Theology: Studies in African Religious Creation Care
by Ebenezer Yaw Blasu
Wipf and Stock, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
978-1-5326-8361-9 / paperback / \$35
www.wipfandstock.com

New Title from Ebenezer Yaw Blasu
African Theology: Studies in African Religious Creation Care



There is probably no set of issues of greater importance in the contemporary world than those that are to do with the Earth on which we live and depend. The more alienated we become from it the more we contribute to our own destruction. Christianity's complicity in this destruction is well-documented and hotly debated. Africa can ill afford to fall into the same trap that Western Christianity has in this regard. One senses the urgency of these concerns in Blasu's *African Theology: Studies in African Religious Creation Care*. Extremely well-informed in the field, Blasu not only draws on the three major religions in Africa—Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religion—but demonstrates familiarity with the most important recent contributions in the field from Western scholarship. With its emphasis on pedagogics, *African Theology* will play a seminal role in the construction of curricula for an African Christian theology of the environment and is sure to be an essential contribution to all libraries in institutions of higher learning.

Ebenezer Yaw Blasu is the chaplain of and a senior lecturer at the Presbyterian University College, Ghana. He is a researcher in living theological issues, particularly religious cosmological and ecological praxis and holistic missional and transformational development in Christian higher education. He is the author of *The Messiah is Coming Again* (2002) and *Physiologic Link Between Nutrition and Reproduction in Ruminants* (2014). He is a contributing author to the *Journal of African Christian Thought* and *Evangelical Theological Review*.



What is African Theocology?

African theocology is the study of God as Creator and the relationships between him and his creation, including human and other-than-human creations. The book seeks to understand these relationships, and particularly, how the niche occupied by humans as vicegerents of God, may be an impulsion for our moral creation care. It proffers a distinctive voice in the fields of African religious studies, ecological responses and theology. Quite apart from its rich insights, this book provides us with possible models as Africa's contribution to the world discourse on our endangered environment. It is therefore, a paradigmatic and pragmatic approach to caring for creation from African Christian perspective.

What is a paradigm and how is African theocology paradigmatic?

In science and philosophy, a paradigm is a distinct set of concepts or thought patterns, including theories, research methods, postulates, and standards for what constitutes legitimate contributions to a field. African theocology is a paradigm in that it studies not only the limitations of both scientific and religious ecological practices, but postulates integrating their progressive aspects. More specifically it insists on theocentric approaches derived from African religious consciousness, eco-praxis and socio-cultural self-understanding as eco-communal beings, for concerted efforts in responding to common ecological issues. That is to say African theocology requires sharing common practical experiences, concepts and cultural tolerance on particular issues of ecocrisis from scientific and the religious cosmologies and ecological ethics of the major traditions—Primal, Christian and Islam—in Africa.

How pragmatic is African theocology?

African theocology as an approach to caring for creation reminds humanity of its position as vicegerent of God in responsibly caring for creation. It retrieves, re-interprets and reconstructs religious and scientific ecological principles and praxis, such that the scientific insights provide helpful affirmations of the biblical revelations. This becomes a moral impulsion for integral approach in ecological actions. In this respect, African holistic and precarious worldviews play a significant underpinning role, particularly in deriving ecological ethics. Thus, even special socio-cultural rituals such as birthing and funerary rites convey stimulus of priming humanity for moral creation care.

How is African theocology different from ecotheology?

Etymologically theocology connotes a conception of God's perspective of creation and not our perception of God from creation, though the latter is implicit. Unlike ecotheology, which connotes natural theology, African theocology is a coronary of theology of nature, undergirding and stimulating moral engagement of scientific ecology. It insists on beginning the study of ecological science and ecocrisis with the Creator of the creation that is in the crisis. It encourages toleration of common religious views that promote harnessing socio-cultural synergy for responding to ecocrisis in plural-religious eco-communities.

Who can benefit from the African theology book?

Among others, students of environmental sciences, scientific ecology, theology, ecotheology and religious ecology can benefit from this book. By students I mean anyone in either formal or informal learning system such as educational institutes, religious bodies (Primal religionists, Christians and Muslims) or private individual environmentalists. The book is for anyone interested in participating in the global search for relevant and effective ways of addressing our global ecocrisis alongside development agenda. Thus, both government and non-governmental organisations involved in development projects need this book; especially all organisations and institutions that heed to World Bank's advice to involve local people and their religiosity in sustainable development concerns will find this book helpful.

How specifically helpful is the African theology book for teaching in educational institutes, primal communities, churches and mosques?

The book's unique feature from the onset is its mind-set to enhance the teaching and learning about the environment in such a way as to provide moral impulses for creation care in both students and faculty. It was motivated by and resulted from classroom experiences where some students and faculty challenged integration of scientific facts with religious faith in the study of environmental science. Consequently, with its emphasis on pedagogics this book will play a seminal role in the construction of curricula for an African Christian theology of the environment throughout the continent. It presents understandings and tools for engaging natural principles and religious eco-ethics of sustainability. These principles and eco-ethical praxis were retrieved and reconstructed from ontological experiences in African context; and this informed a suggested curriculum for higher institutions that offer mandatory environmental science course.

An Excerpt from *African Theology: Studies in African Religious Creation Care*

The African theology course is designed as a mandatory subject to provide moral ecological orientation to undergraduate students in all academic disciplines of study in the Christian higher educational institutions, particularly in Ghana. It introduces the newly emerging field of religion and ecology, or theocology for short, as a hopeful missional alternative that may pragmatically encourage moral responsibility for creation rather than 'environmental science' as a secular subject. It explores human relations to the natural world as understood in African Christianity, but incorporates phenomenological parallels from Primal and Islamic traditions, since 'pluralism has important implications for any project to bring about a more ecological society' (Patrick Curry, 2011). The course draws on both African religious worldviews and modern scientific concepts of the field of ecology for an understanding of the orientation of humanity to the creator and creation as well as the dynamic processes of Earth's ecosystems and their function.

As John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker (2014) observe, 'for many years science, engineering, policy, law, and economics were considered indispensable for understanding and resolving environmental problems,' based on western Enlightenment and secular views of the world. They argue that,

We now have abundant knowledge from these disciplines about environmental issues, but still not sufficient moral will to engage in long-term change for the flourishing of the Earth community. Thus, there is a growing realization that religion, spirituality, ethics, and values can make important contributions, in collaboration with science and policy, to address complex ecological issues.

The course proposes to examine those contributions, particularly from African perspectives, acknowledging both the problems and promises of religions, especially Christianity.

David Mutasa et al. (2008) observe that teaching about the environment in Africa has usually been teacher-centered, thus the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge. They suggest that today environmental education requires taking the learners outdoors to the biophysical environment. They believe that 'by teaching in the environment, an emotional bond will be established between the learner and the environment' as has been the experience in our indigenous African eco-cultures. *African Theology* is designed with a mind-set of being not only a holistic missional curriculum for moral transformation toward creation care, but also to be delivered with a pragmatic and balanced pedagogy including integration of faith and dependence on the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. Students need to be exposed to real environmental situations as much as possible, participate in an ecological culture of the institution and use Scriptures as hermeneutic of the ecological issues encountered whether from an ecological science (fact-base) or religious ecology (faith-base) perspective.

Praise for *African Theology: Studies in African Religious Creation Care*

“This is an excellent piece of work. Blasu not only draws on the three major religions in Africa—Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religion—but demonstrates familiarity with the most important recent contributions in the field from Western scholarship.”

—Anthony Oswald Balcomb, University of Kwazulu-Natal

