

## CONTRIBUTION OF ECOTHEOLOGY TO THE HARMONY OF LIFE

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### **Abstract**

Harmony of life concerns various dimensions, both individual and social. The broadest perspective is harmony in the relationships among all creatures of the animate and inanimate world, which is the subject of interest to the contemporary theological movement known as ecotheology. This text presents the contribution ecotheology makes to the harmony of life, an essential element of which is human life in harmony with the natural environment and other creatures, or from the perspective of communion among all creatures. The author begins by presenting the general concept of the field of study of ecotheology. Next, the text discusses the concept of ecological sin, developed within the framework of ecotheology, and its significance for understanding the harmony of life. Finally, the text presents essential postulates of ecotheology that are relevant to the harmony of life from an ecological perspective. Ecotheology's contribution to the harmony of life lies in its postulates for a comprehensive understanding of the ecological crisis and the search for solutions, protecting against reductive solutions, and contributing to a holistic vision of creation.

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**Keywords:** Harmony of Life, Ecotheology, Communion of Creatures, Environmental Protection, Theology of Creation.

The harmony of life, understood most broadly as a state of calm, balance, and order achieved through alignment across different areas of life, encompasses many aspects. At the individual level, it includes inner balance associated with self-acceptance and a sense of unity with oneself, congruence with one's own beliefs, balance among various spheres of life, general well-being, appropriate relationship building, the capacity to handle difficulties and challenges, conflict resolution skills, and appreciation of the small aspects of life that bring satisfaction. Alongside harmony in individual personal life, a wider understanding of life harmony, which Albert Schweitzer linked to all living beings and from which he derived the principles of an ethics of respect for life, holds significant importance<sup>1</sup>. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis wrote about the harmony of life as a universal communion, according to which "The created things of this world are not free of ownership: "For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living" (*Wis* 11:26). This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect"<sup>2</sup>.

The harmony of life is a subject of research and study across various disciplines, primarily the humanities, including theology, which makes a significant contribution to a holistic understanding of life's balance through the biblical vision of creation, reflections in bioethics, and treatises on eschatology. Ecotheology is a contemporary emerging branch of theology concerned with the harmony of life, understood from the perspective of the communion of all creatures. The aim of this text is to demonstrate the contribution ecotheology makes to the harmony of life, a crucial element of which is human life in harmony with the natural environment and other creatures. The general concept of ecotheology's research will be introduced. Next, the problem of ecological sin, developed within ecotheological approaches, will be discussed, along with its significance for the

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<sup>1</sup> E. Schockenhoff, *Etyka życia. Podstawy i nowe wyzwania*, trans. K. Glombik, (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2014), 86-88.

<sup>2</sup> Franciszek, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, (Vatican: LEV 2015) (further: LS), 89.

harmony of life. Finally, the key postulates of ecotheology relevant to the harmony of life from an ecological perspective will be presented.

### 1. Harmony of Life as the Main Idea of Ecotheology

Ecotheology, as a distinct and specific branch of theology, emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by the growing awareness of environmental degradation and by ecological research that had been developing since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Problems related to the devastation of the natural environment, which contradicts the harmony of life and threatens human existence, were addressed by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, Part 3 of which was devoted to the relationship between humanity and the environment in which it lives, and subsequently addressed in papal teachings to this day. Particularly telling in this regard is John Paul II's statement in his message for the 1990 World Day of Peace, according to which "Theology, philosophy and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a "cosmos" endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance. This order must be respected. The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity"<sup>3</sup>.

Amid the increasingly widespread recognition of the consequences of the ecological crisis, which threatens humanity and the harmony of life, there grew a sense of the need to develop a specific theological reflection, for which the term ecotheology was adopted. This was accomplished on the conviction that resolving the ecological crisis is not possible solely through technical guidelines derived from the specific sciences but rather requires a theological perspective that presents life and the natural environment as expressions of the Creator's gifts to humanity and the need to care for them. In Poland, theological reflection on ecological issues was initiated by Roman E. Rogowski (1936–2023), who in 1981 wrote about theoecology as the theological science of the supernatural, divine environment in which humans live, and of which the natural environment is a sign, a kind of sacrament. Rogowski emphasised that theoecology is an engaged science, stemming from reading the signs of the times, a discipline combining ecology and theology, connected to the spiritual and

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace. 1 January 1990, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation, 8, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19891208\\_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html) (27.11.2025).

material spheres, because it concerns humanity as a being who unites these two orders and remains in a constant relationship between creation and Creator. Rogowski believed that theoecology constitutes a doctrinal dimension of environmental theology, according to which the natural is contained within the supernatural, transcendence exists in immanence, and vice versa. Based on the assumption that everything is the work of God the Creator, a theologian from Wrocław argued that nature is studied through ecological sciences, describing its state, conditions, laws, and relationships in a cause-and-effect order. As God's work, it carries within itself the truth about Him and appears sacred. Humans have been specially chosen yet are also among the creatures with whom God has made a covenant and therefore cannot subordinate other covenant partners to themselves. In Rogowski's view, ecology enriched by such approaches is a theoecology that complements the ecology developed within the biological and natural sciences. Such an approach restores the sacred element to the contemporary understanding of reality, which has been lost through the increasing technologicalisation of life and reality<sup>4</sup>. According to Rogowski, "Theoecology is the theological science of the supernatural, Divine Environment in which man lives, and of which his natural environment is a sign, a sacrament, as it were"<sup>5</sup>.

Ecotheology draws on a position rooted in biblical tradition regarding humanity's relationship to the created world. In the context of the ecological crisis, it has found new inspiration and realised the indispensability of dialogue with the natural sciences, primarily ecology. Theology, which views the world from the perspective of God's revelation, means that ecotheology is not merely a theological interpretation of ecology, or a kind of meta-background, but a branch of theology that interprets ecological problems in the light of Revelation and tradition. Its goal is a holistic vision of the world, taking into account the problems engendered by progress and civilisation, and from the perspective of the Christian faith, it seeks answers to the questions posed by ecology. At the heart of

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<sup>4</sup> J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, (Warszawa: Aspra 2020), 39-40; J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia jako odpowiedź na współczesny kryzys ekologiczny*, "Teologia w Polsce" 5 (2011), nr 2, 289-298, tu 290-292; K. Małek, *Rozwój teologii ekologicznej w Polsce. Od teoekologii do ekoteologii*, "Studia Philosophiae Christianae UKSW" 58 (2022), 117-139, 119. R. Rogowski, *Teoekologia. Szkic z teologii doświadczenia*, *Colloquium Salutis. Wrocławskie Studia Teologiczne* 13 (1981), 191-201; R.E. Rogowski, *Światłość i tajemnica. Z problematyki teologii egzystencjalnej*, Katowice: Księgarnia Świętego Jacka 1986, 103-114.

<sup>5</sup> Rogowski, *Światłość i tajemnica*, 113.

ecothology's message is the universe created by God as ordered, beautiful, diverse, and rich, good and awe-inspiring, a theotrophic cosmos. This relatively new branch of theology describes the communion of creation designed by God, expressed through the interdependence and solidarity of created beings and entities, and presents a vision of a world in which harmony reigns and reflects God's infinite perfection and wisdom. Furthermore, ecotheology assumes that each creature possesses inherent value, inherent permanence, truth, and its own laws<sup>6</sup>. At the heart of the message of ecotheology, which contributes to the harmony of life, is the message of "the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely" and, consequently, "mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face"<sup>7</sup>.

An exemplary expression of the essence of ecotheology's message is the text by Leonardo Boff, included in the introduction to the book entitled *Sacraments of the Church*. There we read: „I dedicate this little book to the mountain range that constantly peers into my windows. Sometimes the sun scorches it, sometimes it smooths it. Often, the rain lashes it. Often, the mist gently envelops it. Yet I have never heard it complain of heat or cold. It has never demanded compensation for its majestic grandeur. Nor does it want thanks. It simply gives itself. Freely. It is no less majestic when the sun caresses it than when the wind lashes it. It is indifferent to whether you look at it or not. Nor does it mind anyone climbing it. It is like God: it can bear everything, endure everything, and accept everything. God behaves like it. Therefore, the mountain range is a sacrament of God: it reveals, reminds, gives directions, and refers to other horizons. And because it is such, I dedicate this book to it in thanksgiving. An attempt will be made here to speak the sacramental language which he does not speak, but which – which is more important – he himself is"<sup>8</sup>.

The demand for the development of ecotheology as a distinct branch of theology, one that employs its own argumentation and methodology and reflects on religious truths about the world and humanity, unifying them into a system that allows for the formulation of norms for human behaviour in and toward the world. The task of

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<sup>6</sup> J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, 41-42.

<sup>7</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum*, (Vatican: LEV 2023), 65.

<sup>8</sup> L. Boff, *Sakramenty Kościoła*, transl. J. Doktor, (Warszawa: PAX 1981), 5; see also: L. Boff, M. Hathaway, *Ökologie und die Theologie der Natur*, „*Concilium*” 54 (2018), vol. 5, 509-518; the encyclical *LS 233-234* also contains the motif of recognizing God in creatures.

ecotheology, which arose and is developing in the context of the ecological crisis, is to present, through the lens of Revelation, the relationship between humanity and the world of animate and inanimate nature, which, by the will of the Creator, should be characterised by balance and harmony. Respect and respect for all creatures stems from the belief that they are not matter entirely subordinated to humanity and their interests but a reality in relationship to God and revealing His wisdom and love, which makes them worthy of respect and responsible treatment. The general idea of ecotheology, understood in this way, makes it a discipline in dialogue with other sciences and brings to the studies, research, and ecological activities in other sciences the perspective of universal, ultimate motivations and objective values, rules, and principles<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. Ecological Sin as the Source of Disharmony in Life

One of the questions developed within ecotheological approaches is the issue of ecological sin, which contradicts their central message of the harmony of life. This issue emphasises the ecological crisis, whose source is ecological sin, rooted in the mystery of original sin. The harmony of creation, intended by God, has been disrupted by sin, which has not only caused the destruction of humanity's relationship with God but also has consequences for humanity's relationship with the created world. Ecosin is a betrayal of humanity's calling to "subdue the earth" (Gen. 10), in accordance with God the Creator's plan, and an abuse of this commandment through irresponsible use of the earth's resources, without an attitude of respect and service for the created world, which is a gift from God. Approaches to ecological sin emphasise anthropocentrism by emphasising that its consequences are directed primarily against humanity, as environmental destruction and its negative effects primarily affect the perpetrator of the destruction and devastation of the natural world<sup>10</sup>. A glaring manifestation of sinful actions is the deterioration and pollution of the natural environment, the degradation of factors essential for life, and ecological disasters. From an ecotheological perspective, ecological sin and its consequences are linked to humanity's attempt to usurp the position of creator and legislator of the laws governing the universe

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<sup>9</sup> J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> For example, such an approach is included in the study: B. Jurczyk, *Ekologia – człowiek – Kościół. Antropologiczny wymiar kryzysu ekologicznego w ocenie Kościoła*, (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2002).

and to a demanding and predatory understanding of God's creative command<sup>11</sup>.

The challenge and problem for ecotheology is to recognise and acknowledge the inherent value of creation, its relationship to God, and the need for humanity to respect the laws that govern it. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, addresses these issues. The document clearly warns against undermining this connection. It states: "For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore, if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labours to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity"<sup>12</sup>. The Council, while postulating the autonomy of temporal things in this context, explains that this does not mean that "(...) created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator (...). For without the Creator, the creature would disappear. For their part, however, all believers of whatever religion always hear His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible"<sup>13</sup>.

From the perspective of ecological theology, a proper understanding of the autonomy of earthly things is enabled by a salvific perspective, which leads to a new vision of solidarity. It is based on the conviction of interdependence not only between human beings and the world, but also on the truth of God as Creator and Father, who is in solidarity with His creation. Divine solidarity, identical with love and providence, encompasses humanity in a

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<sup>11</sup> J. Babiński, Ekoteologia jako odpowiedź na współczesny kryzys ekologiczny, 294; J. Babiński, Ekoteologia, 155-181; J. Nagórny, Teologia ekologii. O prawdziwie chrześcijańskie spojrzenie na kwestie ekologiczne, in: J. Nagórny, J. Gocko (ed.), Ekologia. Przesłanie moralne Kościoła, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2002), 187-203, tu 197.

<sup>12</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, (Vatican: LEV) (further: GS), 36.

<sup>13</sup> GS 36.

special way but is not limited to it. In His creative and salvific plans, God linked human development with the development of the world. His solidarity with humanity finds its extension in His care for all that has been created. The vision of God in covenant with human beings and the world, in solidarity with human beings and the world, results in a call for humanity to be in solidarity with God and the world He created. Consequently, one cannot be in solidarity with God without being in solidarity with the world He created, and at the same time, one cannot be in solidarity with the world in the spirit of ecological care without being in solidarity with God, its Creator. Caring for the natural environment must not lead to the deification of the earthly world, but should be an expression of love for God. Responsibility for the natural environment is an expression of accepting it as a gift from God, which, in turn, leads to it. Degradation of the natural environment or insufficient care for it is an opposition to self-love and love for neighbour, but also to love for creation and its Creator<sup>14</sup>.

From a theological perspective, a proper understanding of the creative commandment: "subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28) is crucial for explaining the issue of ecological sin and the need for conversion, as well as for justifying the prohibition against exploiting creation for arbitrary human purposes. The Hebrew concept of *kābaš* (to submit, to subdue, to conquer, to tread upon, to set foot upon) used in reference to human dominion over the earth has an ambivalent meaning, as it can signify both subordination and destruction, but also a declaration of ownership, which one is ready to guard and protect. Consequently, this concept can be used to justify both the possibility of consciously destructive and disrespectful treatment of creation and the responsible shaping and nurturing of creation and the engagement of human abilities, so that nature, in accordance with the Creator's blessing, may flourish and bear fruit. In this sense, *kābaš* is similar to the action of a farmer who ploughs a field not to destroy it but to cultivate it for the sake of producing a harvest. Similarly, the concept of *rādā*, applied to humankind's relationship with animals, has an ambivalent character, as it can mean: to rule, to reign, but also to accompany' or 'to walk'. Its theological meaning signifies humanity's task as a representative of God the Creator towards creation. This attitude is about expressing the creative power and joy of God, the lover of life, who created the universe with its orderly rhythm of day and night, the earth and the sea, creating from them a living space for

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<sup>14</sup> J. Nagórny, *Teologia ekologii*, 198-200.

various living beings. As a representative of God, like the Creator, humanity is to be a lover of life and affirm creation, protect it, and support it. Consequently, an attitude of arbitrary interference in nature in all its forms and aspects is inconsistent with God the Creator's intention, but it is appropriate to act in a way that signifies respect and preservation of the earth as a space for all living creatures and respect for the entirety of nature, that is, harmony in the lives of all creatures<sup>15</sup>.

In Pope Francis's view, human existence is based on three fundamental, closely interconnected relationships: with God, other people, and the earth. The harmony between the Creator, humanity, and all of creation was broken by sin, because man attempted to take God's place, refusing to acknowledge himself as a limited creature. Interpreting the statement about dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) in the sense of domination and destructive human activity and fostering the ruthless exploitation of nature is erroneous, and it is unacceptable to conclude from it that man has absolute dominion over other creatures. This text, read in its context and with proper hermeneutics, encourages us to "cultivate and tend" the garden of the world. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we read: "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. "The earth is the Lord's" (Ps 24:1); to him belongs "the earth with all that is within it

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<sup>15</sup> M.M. Lintner, *Der Mensch und das liebe Vieh. Ethische Fragen im Umgang mit Tieren*. Innsbruck – Wien: Tyrolia 2017, 42–44; M. Rock, Verantwortung für die Umwelt. Überlegungen aus der Sicht christlicher Ethik, in: W. Seidel (ed.), *Befreiende Moral. Handeln aus christlicher Verantwortung*, Würzburg: Echter 1991, 124–146, tu 126–130; W. Trilling. *Stworzenie i upadek według Rdz 1–3*. Transl. Edmund Schulz. Warszawa: PAX 1980, 44–45; James Strong. 2017. *Hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski słownik Stronga z lokalizacją słów hebrajskich i aramejskich oraz kodami Baumgartnera*. Transl. Aleksandra Czwajdrak. Prymasowska Seria Biblijna. Warszawa: Vocatio, 492, 991; Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, Johann Jakob Stamm. 2013<sup>2</sup>. *Wielki słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu*. Ed. Przemysław Dec. Transl. Karol Madaj. Vol. 1: *Słownik hebrajsko-polski א–ז*. Prymasowska Seria Biblijna. Warszawa: Vocatio, 240–241, 435; K. Glombik, Biodiversity from the Perspective of the Theology of Universal Communion, in: K. Glombik (ed.), *Theology in Dialogue. An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Contemporary Issues*, Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2025, 67–88, tu 76–77.

cosmos" (Dt 10:14). Thus, God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me cosmos (Lev 25:23)"<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. The Postulates of Ecotheology in the Service of Harmony of Life

The documents of Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI encourage theological reflection on ecological issues and provide impetus for the development of theological thinking about nature, awakening ecological sensitivity and thus encouraging the "theologisation of ecology". Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* presents a comprehensive vision of Catholic ecotheology, which is in dialogue with other sciences on the environment and nature, but also has great potential for integrating individual branches of theology, as ecological issues require multifaceted theological reflection. Collaboration between various branches of theology is essential, including biblical exegesis, which exposes erroneous interpretations of Sacred Scripture and, based on proper hermeneutics, presents its ecological message. A theology of creation should even more clearly present God the Creator and creation from the perspective of the order of love, as well as their mutual relationality and interconnectedness. Since the community of creation as a whole reflects God's wisdom and his Trinitarian life, this requires a reorientation in understanding the image of God and a clearer articulation of the cosmic dimension of the incarnation of the Son of God and his redemptive work, which concerns all of creation. *Laudato Si'*, by calling for ecological conversion, inspires not only a change in thinking and action on ecological issues but also deeper studies in moral theology, awakening an awareness of responsibility for the created world. Ecotheological reflection must also include aspects of liturgical studies, sacramentology, spiritual theology, pastoral theology, ecumenism, and Catholic social teaching, which will enable the creative engagement of Christian thought in the process of shaping a universal response to the ecological crisis<sup>17</sup>, and at the same time it will be an important contribution to the harmony of life.

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<sup>16</sup> LS 66–67.

<sup>17</sup> J. Poznański, *Ekoteologia przed i po encyklice Laudato si'*, "Studia Bobolanum" 30 (2019), nr 3, 71–92, tu 77–84; Babiński, *Ekoteologia jako odpowiedź na współczesny kryzys ekologiczny*, 296–298; J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, 188–192; Małek, *Rozwój teologii ekologicznej w Polsce*, 123–133; S. Rabiej, *Ecotheology in the service of religion and science*, "Studia Oecumenica" 20 (2020), 51–65.

In the face of ecological sin, one of the most important challenges for ecotheology is a critical approach to the underlying radical anthropocentrism, which considers only human interests and needs as essential and, consequently, legitimises the reduction of nonhuman creatures and nature to their material and immaterial value for humans, which is ethically irresponsible. In this regard, theological formulations about humans as the “crown of creation” become problematic, as they support radical anthropocentrism. The answer seems to be a moderate anthropocentrism, in light of which humans bear responsibility not only for other humans but also for other creatures within their sphere of activity and lifestyle, as well as for the natural conditions of life and ecosystems that create complex living spaces without which life is impossible. Ultimately, moderate anthropocentrism is about the harmony of life, which concerns all creatures. While it is undisputed that humans cannot abandon their own perspective, according to which they bear moral responsibility for creation because they are rational and capable of morality, controversy remains over whether these capacities constitute the basis for their special place in the universe, or whether this is merely a gradual, rather than qualitative, difference from other creatures. Another issue concerns the distinction between human dignity and the intrinsic value of nonhuman creatures and inanimate nature, where dignity is justified in the sense of their own purposefulness and capacity for moral self-determination. This leads to the recognition of the right to respect from other creatures, whose meaning and existence cannot be understood and derived solely from the perspective of their material and immaterial values for them, but must be perceived within them. The theological understanding of nature as creation, which is the subject of ecotheology, enables a religious justification of the inherent value of every creature, living or inanimate, by its inherent way of pointing to the Creator. This perspective provides motivation for the responsible treatment of nonhuman living beings and of nature, the living space of all living beings<sup>18</sup>.

As an interdisciplinary field, ecotheology holds the potential for dialogue between science and theology, reason and faith, and opens the way to interdisciplinary, intercultural discourse. Only through reason and faith can we arrive at the full truth about the causes of the ecological crisis, the possibilities of overcoming it, and the means of

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<sup>18</sup> M.M. Lintner, *Anthropozentrismus, Biozentrismus, Ökozentrismus* (2), “*Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego*” 44 (2024), nr 1, 11-25, tu 20-23; J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, 182-183.

restoring the lost harmony of life. In the past, due to the development of science, theology abandoned reflection on the cosmos and nature and focused on anthropological issues, primarily concerning humanity's relationship with God, while simultaneously downplaying references to other creatures. This led to a form of reductionism in theology that narrowed the message of Christian revelation to the issue of individual salvation and eternal life, omitting the material and temporal dimensions of all creation. Ecotheology restores the awareness that God acts not only in human history and saves not only humans, but that salvation takes place in the created world and encompasses all creatures. It reopens the possibility of perceiving God and His action in creation and leads to unity between creation as God's initiating act and the redemption of creation. Furthermore, ecotheological reflection protects against a technocratic and mechanistic conception of reality that reduces the perception of nature to merely utilitarian categories, a constant temptation of the specific sciences, especially the technical ones. By asking questions about the origins of all material being, its value, and ultimate destiny, ecotheology leads to the discovery of the truth about the dignity of all creatures, not just humans, and demands the rejection of all deificationist ways of treating nature, because the dignity of creatures is the quality of their existence, and the dignity of humans exists in harmony with the dignity of other creatures and does not imply elevating them above other creatures, but is a commitment to respect all other forms of existence<sup>19</sup>.

In addition to the legal principles and socio-political tools necessary in a pluralistic society, ecotheology as a scientific discipline makes a significant contribution to the harmony of life by promoting fundamental beliefs and attitudes that express a benevolent approach to life in all its manifestations, both for each human being and for other creatures of both animate and inanimate nature. One of these fundamental attitudes is admiration and wonder toward creation, which applies both to each human being, who reveals God's majesty, and to each creature, who reflects God's omnipotence and wisdom, in close interrelation and interdependence with God. Respect for life gives rise to an attitude of compassion and care for creation, an expression of solidarity. These attitudes, in turn, lead to self-limitation and moderation, which requires recognising limits and the necessity of learning to live in harmony with these creatures. An attitude of

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<sup>19</sup> J. Babiński, *Ekoteologia*, 36-37.

moderation promotes life, expresses its affirmation, and creates space for the harmony of life within the boundaries set and intended by the Creator<sup>20</sup>.

Ecotheology, as a recently developing branch of theology, emerged in the context of interpreting the signs of the times, including the contemporary ecological crisis. Although the methodological status of this discipline has not yet been fully defined, its core content has the potential to integrate all the individual branches of theology and to engage in dialogue with other sciences. In this way, ecotheology opens perspectives for a comprehensive understanding of the ecological crisis and the search for solutions, protects against reductive solutions, and contributes to a holistic vision of creation. One aspect of the achievements of developing ecotheology is the development of the concept of ecological sin, which recognises a broader perspective on the sources of the ecological crisis and helps articulate various aspects of responsibility for creation.

Ecotheological approaches cannot be limited to theological and moral postulates of responsibility, but it is essential to develop theological content that can be qualified as part of the central Christian message about the created world and nature, as well as the reality of the temporal, living, and material world from the perspective of God's creation, His saving plan, and ultimate destiny, which cannot be limited to humanity. A particular impetus for the development of ecotheology as a branch of Catholic theology was Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*, devoted entirely to the issue of respect for creation and outlining the essential content of ecotheological discourse. This text does not exhaust the subject matter but rather provides a contribution justifying how ecotheology can contribute to the harmony of life.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Schockenhoff, *Etyka życia*, 577-601.