

From Egocentricity to Eco-Centricity: Humanity's Last Great Transition

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As Europe experiences record-breaking heat, forests burn across continents, rivers shrink under relentless drought, and floods devastate communities with increasing regularity, one truth has become impossible to ignore: climate change is no longer a prediction for future generations. It is the defining reality of our own.

The scientific evidence is now overwhelming. The Earth's climate is warming at an unprecedented rate due primarily to human activity. The latest reports leave little room for complacency. Yet despite decades of international climate summits, political declarations, corporate sustainability commitments and growing public awareness, greenhouse gas emissions remain dangerously high, biodiversity continues to decline, and the ecological systems upon which civilisation depends are under increasing strain.

This should compel us to ask a deeper question: *Why, despite overwhelming scientific evidence and increasingly visible ecological collapse, have we struggled to respond with the urgency the crisis demands?*

The answer, I believe, lies not merely in politics, economics or technology. It lies in the way humanity has come to understand its place within creation. For several centuries, much of modern civilisation has been shaped by what I describe as **egocentricity**—a worldview that places human desires, economic growth and material consumption at the centre of decision-making. Nature has too often been regarded as little more than a warehouse of resources existing primarily for human use. Forests become timber. Rivers become industrial assets. Oceans become dumping grounds. Even success is measured largely through economic output and personal accumulation rather than by the health of communities, ecosystems or future generations. This worldview has undoubtedly produced extraordinary advances. Scientific discovery has transformed medicine, communication, transportation and agriculture. Millions have been lifted out of poverty. Human ingenuity is rightly celebrated.

Yet alongside these achievements has emerged a dangerous illusion: that humanity exists apart from nature and can continue extracting from a finite planet without consequence. Climate change exposes the bankruptcy of that illusion!

The atmosphere does not negotiate with political ideologies. The oceans do not respond to election cycles. Ecosystems do not recognise national borders. The laws of creation cannot be suspended by economic ambition. The ecological crisis therefore challenges us to rethink not only environmental policy but the very assumptions upon which modern civilisation has been built.

What is required is nothing less than a transition from **egocentricity to eco-centricity**.

Eco-centricity is not anti-human. Nor does it require abandoning economic development, scientific progress or technological innovation. Rather, it recognises a deeper truth: genuine

human flourishing depends upon the flourishing of the wider Earth community. We are not masters standing outside creation; we are participants within it. Every breath we take depends upon forests and oceans producing oxygen. Every meal depends upon fertile soils, healthy microorganisms, pollinating insects and stable weather patterns. Every economy ultimately rests upon functioning ecosystems. To damage these systems is not simply to harm nature; it is to undermine the very foundations upon which civilisation itself depends.

The Christian tradition has long affirmed this profound interconnectedness. The opening chapters of Genesis are frequently misunderstood as granting humanity unrestricted dominion over the Earth. Yet a closer reading tells a different story. Humanity is placed in the garden "to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew verbs imply both cultivation and protection. They describe stewardship rather than exploitation, service rather than domination.

Indeed, Scripture consistently reminds us that ownership belongs not to humanity but to God. As the Psalmist declares, **"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1)**. We therefore inhabit creation as trustees rather than proprietors. Stewardship is not an optional environmental concern added to Christian discipleship; it is woven into the very fabric of humanity's vocation. This biblical vision stands in sharp contrast to the assumptions that have shaped much of industrial modernity.

The Apostle Paul offers an equally profound ecological insight when he writes that **"the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" (Romans 8:22)**. Paul's vision is remarkable because it portrays creation itself as sharing in humanity's brokenness while also participating in God's hope of renewal. Climate change gives this ancient metaphor startling contemporary relevance. The groaning of creation is no longer merely poetic language; it is heard in melting glaciers, burning forests, dying coral reefs and increasingly unpredictable weather systems. The consequences are borne most heavily by those least responsible for causing them. Across Africa, Asia and many small island states, millions already experience food insecurity, displacement and economic hardship resulting from climatic disruption. Ecological injustice has become inseparable from social injustice.

Perhaps this is why the African philosophy of **Ubuntu** speaks so powerfully into our present moment. Ubuntu teaches us, *"I am because we are."* Human identity is fundamentally relational rather than individualistic. Today, we may need to extend that wisdom still further: ***We are because the Earth is.*** Our lives are inseparable from the health of soils, rivers, oceans, forests and countless species with whom we share this remarkable planet.

This understanding is echoed in the New Testament where Paul proclaims that in Christ **"all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17)**. Reality itself is relational. Creation is not a collection of isolated resources, but an interconnected community sustained by God's continuing presence. Recognising this truth changes everything. Governments must move beyond short-term political calculations and enact policies that protect future generations rather than merely satisfying present electoral demands. Multinational corporations must acknowledge

that long-term profitability cannot be separated from ecological stability. Sustainability cannot remain a marketing slogan while business models continue to depend upon environmental degradation. Financial institutions must direct investment towards renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, biodiversity restoration and circular economies rather than perpetuating dependence upon carbon-intensive development. Universities must educate graduates capable not only of succeeding within existing economic systems but of transforming them.

Faith communities, too, must recover their prophetic voice. For too long environmental stewardship has been treated as a peripheral issue rather than a central expression of Christian discipleship. Yet throughout Scripture the prophets consistently connect love of God with justice for neighbour and care for the vulnerable. The prophet Micah famously summarised God's requirement: **"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)**. In the twenty-first century, ecological responsibility has become an essential dimension of that justice. The poor, future generations and countless other species all bear the consequences of decisions made today.

Likewise, the prophet Hosea paints a striking picture of environmental collapse resulting from human unfaithfulness: *"The land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying"* (Hosea 4:3). Written nearly three thousand years ago, these words sound astonishingly contemporary.

Responsibility, however, does not belong solely to governments and institutions. Each of us must examine the assumptions shaping our own lives. Modern consumer culture continually tells us that happiness lies in acquiring more, that identity is found through possessions, and that fulfilment is measured by consumption. Jesus challenged precisely this illusion when he warned, **"One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15)**. His words invite us to rediscover a richer understanding of prosperity.

Perhaps true prosperity is not about having more.

Perhaps it is about needing less while living more deeply.

Community rather than competition.

Generosity rather than accumulation.

Enough rather than excess.

Many of life's deepest sources of joy, friendship, family, compassion, worship, creativity, beauty and service, all require remarkably little material consumption. The climate crisis therefore confronts humanity with one of the greatest moral choices in history. Future generations will ask whether we recognised the warnings before us. They will ask whether we possessed the courage to change. They will ask whether we placed convenience above responsibility, profit above wisdom, or stewardship above exploitation.

History remembers those moments when societies found the moral imagination to transcend deeply entrenched assumptions. The abolition of slavery, the recognition of universal human rights and the struggle against apartheid each required people to question prevailing systems that had long appeared inevitable. Climate change demands a transformation of comparable significance. This transition will not be secured merely through cleaner technologies or more sophisticated economic models, important though these are. Ultimately, it requires a renewed understanding of who we are, what it means to flourish, and how humanity belongs within the wider community of life.

For Christians, this hope is grounded not in optimism alone but in the promise of God. The Bible does not conclude with the abandonment of creation but with its renewal. The risen Christ declares, **"See, I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:5)**. This is not an invitation to passive waiting but to active participation in God's work of reconciliation, healing and restoration.

The transition from egocentricity to eco-centricity is therefore not merely an environmental strategy; no! It is a moral imperative. It is a spiritual awakening. It is a renewed covenant between humanity and the Earth that God has entrusted to our care. Above all, it is an act of hope.

Despite the severity of the challenges before us, the future has not yet been written. The choices we make today will determine whether our children inherit a planet diminished by our indifference or renewed through our wisdom. The task before us is urgent. The opportunity before us is extraordinary. May we have the courage to choose wisely, not only for ourselves, but for generations yet unborn and for the whole creation that, even now, waits in hope.

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