

LIGHT FOR A NEW DAY:

Interfaith Essays on Energy Ethics

■ **DR. ERIN LOTHES BIVIANO**

Editor

PRESENTED AT

The twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention

Marrakech, November 2016



Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth

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“We share a moral obligation to not harm others, to be fair and to care for the vulnerable.”

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BIOS

PAULETTE LAURENT CAIRE is a leading social entrepreneur, environmental educator, and clean energy developer in Mexico. She is Founder and CEO of Ki Kaab Gourmet, which provides sustainable catering services and distributes in Mexico “Malongo Coffee”, brand leader in fair trade coffees and bio-coffees in France. She is a candidate for a Master of Liberal Arts in Sustainability at Harvard University and engages with interfaith dialogue. As an advocate for an applied energy ethic, she is currently a researcher and project developer at InTrust Global, an organization that is developing clean energy projects of high social and financial impact, in alliance with rural communities, investors and government. She is also regional representative of the Sustainability Literacy Test, an internationally recognized and locally relevant tool that measures and improves sustainability literacy in higher education institutions, companies and other organization around the world. She is co-author of the “One year report - Sustainability Literacy Test,” presented on the occasion of the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development at Nagoya, Japan 2014.

SAFFET ABID CATOVIC is a United States Muslim Environmental Leader of Bosnian-Anglo descent. He is one of the first GreenFaith Muslim Fellows and is Co-founder and Chair of the Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ). He is a founding board member of the Islamic Society of North America’s (ISNA) Green Masjid Task Force. He is a member of the Drafting Committee of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change and a founding member of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN). He serves as the Imam and Muslim Chaplain at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

OSCAR CORVALAN-VASQUEZ, PH.D. (Toronto) Pentecostal Church of Chile, is present secretary of the Pentecostal Latin American Forum (sponsored by the Global Christian Forum). He is the ecumenical officer of the Pentecostal Church of Chile, which has been a member of the WCC since 1964 and has a partnership with the United Church and USA Disciples of Christ for several decades. Thanks to that partnership, his church has developed a 100 hectares territory in the Andean mountains to provide ecological education to children, young people and pastors.

PANKAJ JAIN, PH.D., is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion and in the Department of Anthropology at the University of North Texas and the author of award-winning book *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*. He has published articles in journals such as Religious Studies Review, Worldviews, Religion Compass, Journal of Vaishnava Studies, Union Seminary Quarterly Review, and the Journal of Visual Anthropology. He also contributes to the *Huffington Post*, Washington Post’s forum *On Faith*, Times of India’s *Speaking Tree*, and *Patheos*. Currently, he is working on his next book, *Science and Socio-Religious Revolution in India: Moving the Mountains* (Routledge, forthcoming in 2017) and editing a volume, *Indian Philosophical Theories of Religion and Anthropology*.

LUIS ARÁNGUIZ KAHN holds a degree in Spanish Literature and a minor in theology from the Catholic University of Chile, and is currently completing a master's degree in International Studies at the University of Santiago, Chile. He has worked academically in texts and lectures on literature and religion, evangelical analysis of political discourse in Chile and my master's thesis will be in the general field of evangelicals and international politics. Luis comes from a family of traditional Chilean Pentecostalism and was a university leader at a Pentecostal youth group and a preacher at his local congregation.

DAVID R. LOY, PH.D., is a professor of Buddhist and comparative philosophy, writer, and Zen teacher in the Sanbo Kyodan tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism. His essays and books have been translated into many languages and his articles appear regularly in major Buddhist and scholarly journals.

David lectures nationally and internationally on various topics, focusing primarily on the encounter between Buddhism and modernity: what each can learn from the other. He is especially concerned about social and ecological issues, and identifies an important parallel between what Buddhism says about our personal predicament and our collective predicament today in relation to the rest of the biosphere.

MAT MCDERMOTT is a Hindu American living in New York City. He is the Director of Communications for the Hindu American Foundation, an Advisor for the Bhumi Project, a Hindu environmental organization based at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, and the principal author of the *2015 Hindu Declaration on Climate Change*. His writing has appeared in *Hinduism Today*, *Yale e360*, the *Omega Institute*, and primarily at TreeHugger.com where he was the Business, Politics, and Energy editor for many years.

NCUMISA MAGADLA is a black South African young woman, a former journalism student, and currently communications officer for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's Environmental Network. Her work is focused on leadership among the youth of Southern Africa, especially Anglicans, to heighten awareness of our environmental challenges and to advise them regarding recreating a vision for Eco Churches and communities.

RABBI YONATAN NERIL founded and directs the The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development. A native of California, Yonatan completed an M.A. and B.A. from Stanford University with a focus on global environmental issues, and received rabbinical ordination in Israel. He has spoken internationally on religion and the environment, and organized three interfaith environmental conferences in Jerusalem in which religious leaders of several faiths spoke.

FR. EDWARD OSANG OBI, MSP, PH.D., is a Catholic Priest and social ethicist from Nigeria, who advocates for good governance, safe environments, and secure livelihoods. In addition to teaching Moral Theology at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), he is National Coordinator of a coalition of environmental NGOs working for peace and curbing violence in communities in the Niger Delta region. Fr. Obi runs a technical agency for the Niger Delta Catholic Bishops' Forum (NDCBF), known as Gas Alert for Sustainable Initiative

(GASIN). This agency is dedicated to following and, possibly, influencing developments in the gas sector in Nigeria, to ensure that less harmful technologies are used in the inherently dangerous processes of dehydrating and utilizing natural gas as an interim fuel.

REV. HIDEHITO OKOCHI, Chief Priest of both Juko-in Temple and Kenju-in Temple in Tokyo, Japan. Rev. Okochi has been a “socially engaged Buddhist” and pioneer in the Buddhist world of Japanese activist and advocacy campaigns seeking to create a world without discrimination and exploitation, especially one without a military and nuclear presence. Rev. Okochi helped establish the InterFaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy in 1993 and the Edogawa Citizens Network for Thinking about Global Warming in 1996, with the goal of reducing peak electricity demand and changing policy in order to promote the spread of alternative forms of energy and involve communities in initiatives. He has engaged the political struggle over the collusion between the government and the national electric companies and the debate over the future of the country’s energy policy, and also engaged in his own community to end the complicity with this overseas exploitation rooted in Japanese consumeristic lifestyles. The vision Rev. Okochi and his partners developed is part of the increasingly well-known Japanese *sato-yama* (village-mountain) policy for developing sustainable human communities living in co-existence with forests as well as marine environments (*sato-umi*).

CLAUDIO DE OLIVEIRA RIBEIRO, PH.D., is a Brazilian Methodist pastor and theologian, Professor at the Methodist University of Sao Paulo, in the Masters and Doctoral Program on Religious Studies, and Coordinator of the Research Group on “Contemporary Spiritualities, religious pluralism and dialogue”. He is a member of the Interfaith Forum of São Paulo that works on issues dealing with Land and Human Rights, democracy and religious pluralism. Rev. Dr. Ribeiro is also Adviser of Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) and Ecumenical groups, and a member of the board of directors of the Ecumenical Center for Evangelization and Popular Education (CESEEP).

PAUSA KAIO THOMPSON, Clergy Member of the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa. Graduate of the Kanana Fou Theological Seminary (Bachelor of Divinity ’15). Currently an MA (2017) candidate at Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York. Actively involved with The Center for Earth Ethics and Climate Justice initiatives at Union.

BEATA TSOSIE-PEÑA is of mixed ancestry from Santa Clara Pueblo and El Rito. She is a poet, mother, farmer and is certified as an educator, early childhood specialist and in permaculture design. She is a Green For All Fellow, and is currently chair for Honor Our Pueblo Existence (H.O.P.E.) The realities of living next to a nuclear weapons complex has called her into environmental health and justice work with the local non-profit organization, Tewa Women United for the last nine years. She believes in the practice and preservation of land-based knowledge, spirituality, language, seeds, our Earth, and family. Her intentions are for healing, wellness and sustainability for future generations.

JONATHAN WATTS is a longtime member and Executive Committee member of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Living in Japan, he has coordinated JNEB, INEB's local branch there. Since the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns, he has become actively engaged in anti-nuclear activism and clean energy initiatives among Buddhists, becoming a central member of INEB's Interfaith Climate and Ecology network (ICE), started in 2012. Together with Rev. Hidehito Okochi, a pioneer in this work, he has begun the INEB/ICE Eco-Temple initiative to promote and build comprehensively ecological religious communities in various parts of Asia.

DR. DANIEL WEBER is a Senior Scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences. Using fish as a model of human environmental health, Dr. Weber studies long-term and intergenerational behavioral effects of early life exposures to a range of toxic chemicals such as lead, mercury and BPA. Community outreach has been an important aspect of Dr. Weber's professional career and has included interactions with public health professionals, schools and inner city neighborhoods. Using this experience, Dr. Weber is a GreenFaith Fellow, the Chair of the Canfei Nesharim Science and Technology Advisory Board, and a Board member of Wisconsin Interfaith Power & Light.



“We respectfully ask those who make decisions on how energy systems are financed, sourced and distributed to ground their decisions in a humble and compassionate reverence for the interconnectedness of all life.”

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LIGHT FOR A NEW DAY:

Faith and Energy Ethics

■ **ERIN LOTHES BIVIANO**

United States Catholic theologian



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ERIN LOTHES is a theologian at the College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ., a researcher in the field of energy ethics, and a scholar of the faith-based environmental movement. Dr. Lothes served as an Earth Institute Fellow at Columbia University; her research analyzing environmental advocacy at diverse American congregations resulted in her book *Inspired Sustainability: Planting Seeds for Action* (Orbis 2016). She is also author of *The Paradox of Christian Sacrifice: The Loss of Self, the Gift of Self* (Herder and Herder, 2007). As an advocate for an interdisciplinary energy ethic within Catholic and interfaith circles, Dr. Lothes is lead author of the co-authored “Catholic Moral Traditions and Energy Ethics for the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Moral Theology* and other peer-reviewed energy ethics essays. Accessible summaries are available at <https://catholicenergyethics21century.wordpress.com/>

Dr. Lothes has advocated for research regarding the moral dimensions of fossil fuel divestment within the Catholic community in the United States, and has participated in the activism and scholarship of the interfaith environmental movement since 2003 through collaborations with groups such as GreenFaith, the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, the Catholic Climate Covenant, and the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Dr. Lothes holds a Ph.D. in systematic Theology from Fordham University, a Master’s in Theology from Boston College, and an A.B. from Princeton University.

Faith and spiritual communities around the world commit themselves to protecting life and celebrating the good gifts of the natural world, the resources of earth that sustain all peoples. Religious festivals and spiritual values express gratitude for the earth's abundance and teach the wise use of all resources. Every day the sun rises and sets over communities and cultures whose diversity of traditions echo the great diversity of the world's ecosystems. Yet in our day the impacts of climate change are now affecting the wellbeing of all, though, as always, the poor are suffering first and worst. Already, vulnerable communities are experiencing dramatic food insecurity, decreased access to clean water, and the de-stabilization of their traditional livelihoods. Many have lost their homes to storm impacts and rising sea levels. But while the poor are already suffering, advanced economies are not exempt from the impacts, as costly payments are already being made to relocate families and businesses must invest in climate adaptation, even in the world's most super developed societies.

Is this our fate? With a growing passion and commitment, the world's faith communities reject this conclusion. Inspired by the desire to relieve present suffering and to protect a future flourishing planet, instead they point to a new horizon in moral teaching. Committed to living their sacred values in new times, the world's faith communities are increasingly bringing the light of their wisdom to articulate *energy ethics*. Energy decisions are not solely technological, economic, and political decisions. *Energy decisions are ethical decisions*, because the energy policies that structure our societies profoundly impact all other persons and living communities, through the globalized web of relationships that is the modern world.

This collection brings together the voices of faith leaders from the world's major religious traditions. In these essays, their traditional values, ancient wisdom, particular moral teachings, and spiritual insights are brought to bear on the critical question of energy ethics. How we must transform our social and economic structures to avoid the devastation of climate change and to create fair access to clean, sustainable energy available for all persons? What values in our shared humanity can inspire every person's conversion to new ways of life, and commitment to radical action?

As energy is an essential resource that is critical to all dimensions of life,

a momentous shift must occur in our social awareness regarding the moral dimensions of energy supply and production. Even more urgently, a shift must occur in the pace and scale of change *in our collective action to invest in and build renewable energy systems*. Energy must be viewed as an ethical question that calls for a moral response from everyone. The global impacts are already evident, and responding to the climate crisis with immediate, dramatic, globally scaled, and currently available renewable technologies is a moral obligation. Our authors, from many faith traditions and regions of the world, here express their visions of those obligations for a new day.

Committed to living their sacred values in new times, the world's faith communities are increasingly bringing the light of their wisdom to articulate energy ethics.

Fr. Edward Osang Obi, OBI, documents the inequitable and polluting investments in Nigerian oil infrastructure that exacerbate the extremes of energy affluence in the global North and dire energy poverty in the global South, and obstruct the development of clean, renewable and accessible energy. Instead of the reckless wasting of gas flaring, creational solidarity calls people to support God's providential plan of providing for all persons with the gifts of the earth.

David R. Loy awakens our consciousness to the reality of social *dukkha*: suffering that is caused by institutional structures. Climate change is the ultimate example of this suffering perpetuated by a global fossil fuel power system resistant to ordinary advocacy: Loy calls for divestment as the necessary response. Pausa Kaio Thompson witnesses to the pleas of a sinking Oceania, sharing their prayers for a worldwide response of faith and conversion to the way of living that will sustain our earth.

Luis Aránguiz Kahn advances a development in Latin American Pentecostalism theology through the dialogue of Pentecostal origins and contemporary social conditions. His call for "ecological political holiness" invites Pentecostals to acknowledge their power in the Spirit and strong

presence in society to call for the end of environmental exploitation, clean energy investments, and access for the millions who lack adequate energy. Providing an important commentary, Rev. Oscar Corvalan-Vasquez, Ph.D., further analyzes the concrete situation of energy in Chile in relation to Pentecostal theology and community life.

Rabbi Yonatan Neril and **Daniel Weber** clearly state the religious and ethical challenge that energy poses in an age when scientist have confirmed the impacts of an intensifying global warming. As Sabbath wisdom teaches humanity to moderate its mastery of the world, today's Jewish communities must advocate for wise energy policies, and seek 100% renewable energy in their sanctuaries.

Beata Tsosie-Pena implores all to recover the reverence for mother earth that inspires care for all our relatives with thankful concern, and preserves the earth and the waters that give life.

Paulette Laurent Caire urges that the UN sustainable development goals be met through cooperative energy development solutions that have social impact, include indigenous communities as co-investors, and ensure an energy transition is fair, democratic, and preserves ancestral values of conservation and community.

Mat McDermott's ecological interpretation of Hindu ethics shows how profiting from fossil fuels contributes to great harm, thus contradicting the principles of *ahimsa* and *asteya*, which support the conditions for well-being for all living beings. Free choice, despite the constraints of past choices and entrenched power structures, must accept that our consumption has limits and that, as a result, most fossil reserves must be left in the ground.

Recalling that God's first commandment is that we be earthkeepers, **Ncumisa Ukeweva Magadla** highlights creation ministry as one of the marks of mission for the Anglican Church. The witness of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's divestment from fossil fuels calls all religious communities to pressure national governments to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels. She affirms that such investments are not investments in our well-being, and do not better our children, but rob from their futures.

Rev. Hidehito Okochi opposes the myth that Japan lacks natural resources to supply its energy needs through his experience as a socially engaged

Buddhist priest. His response to consumerist lifestyles and globalized environmental and economic exploitation is a present-day vision of pure land Buddhism that empowers the marginalized to create eco-communities.

Rev. Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro's pastoral reflections on ecological spirituality connect powerfully with a critique of societies marked by individualism, exclusion, and conflict. Out of concern for the concrete implications of climate change for poor people and families, ecumenical and ecological coalitions need to monitor governments in the transition to 100% renewable energy, and increase their policy ambitions beyond their commitments in the Paris Agreement.

Pankaj Jain reveals the massive levels of hidden emissions from the meat industry, and urges vegetarians and all others to call for transparent, governmental-level documentation of all emissions, to promote policies that counter the deadly air pollution choking cities worldwide, and invites and invites all to embrace the Dharma of sustainable, simple lifestyles.

As energy is an essential resource that is critical to all dimensions of life, a momentous shift must occur in our social awareness regarding the moral dimensions of energy supply and production.

All the authors from these diverse religious traditions perceive energy decisions as a means of advocating for the poor, protecting vulnerable communities, caring for God's creation, and moving toward a sustainable and healthy society.

In certain ways, looking at energy decisions as ethical decisions is new. But its relative novelty does not in any way reduce its urgency. Indeed many have watched the storms brewing for a long time. Some have striven through their personal life decisions, advocacy, and community leadership to light a new way. Others - particularly the fossil fuel industry and the elected

officials and scholars whose careers it has substantially bankrolled - have already given many years and major resources to misinformation, obstruction, and resistance, to protect the fossil fuel infrastructure and their vested interest in it.

In response, religious and spiritual leaders are calling for climate action! Many religious, spiritual, and environmental leaders gathered for COP 22 in Morocco affirm these necessary policy actions, as stated in the Interfaith Statement on Climate Change, calling for:

- States to rapidly increase pledges to reduce emissions, in line with the 1.5°C goal;
- A collective shift by sovereign wealth funds and public sector pension funds away from fossil fuels into renewables and other climate solutions;
- An increase in global financial flows to end energy poverty with renewable energy and to provide for greater human and ecological adaptation, particularly to compensate for loss and damage, technology transfer and capacity building;
- Ensuring that commitments related to human rights are upheld effectively, including the rights of indigenous peoples, gender equality, a just transition, food security, intergenerational equity and the integrity of all ecosystems;
- Stricter controls on the dispute mechanisms within trade agreements that utilize extrajudicial tribunals to challenge government policies;
- Within our own faith communities, for more commitments to divest -invest from fossil fuels into renewable energy and targeted engagement with companies on climate change; grounding this work in pursuing a just transition to renewable energy.¹

We cannot deny the moral nature of our decisions in the energy sphere. It is increasingly impossible to cite ignorance of our implication in the structures from which we benefit, and which we perpetuate, or to protest a

1 Interfaith Statement on Climate Change

lack of viable options. Efforts such as the UN's Sustainable Energy For All initiative, Akon Lighting Africa, and many others advance solutions, strategies, technologies, and capacity in multiple sectors globally. A moral response is obligatory by all ethical standards because there is no community which permits a person or group to persist in harming others by their actions, without warning, censure, or restriction. In the contemporary reality of moral globalization, all are increasingly recognized as responsible for the harm that is caused by their participation in social structures. Moral communities do not authorize harm to others or to the future, and they positively call upon us to choose life, in all of their voices, traditions, and profound expressions of insight. The essays are intended to offer a light for the path forward, and inspire our common resolve to take strong action to build a new energy future.



“Each and every one of us must act on the reality of the climate crisis, so that the damage we inflict upon our sacred Earth ceases and the ecosystems on which all life depends can heal.”

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