

Program Booklet

# NO PLAN(ET) B OR PARADISE



**RELIGION AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
IN THE NETHERLANDS AND BEYOND**  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, UTRECHT, 9-10 OCTOBER 2025



## No Plan(et) B or Paradise

### *Religion and Climate Change in the Netherlands and Beyond*

This conference focuses on flows and differences in religious vocabularies used by Dutch and international groups that are engaged in climate change discourse. The title evokes different perspectives that are present in the current debate. The phrase ‘No Plan(et) B’ emphasizes the critical urgency of addressing climate change. It suggests there is no alternative Earth or ‘Plan B’ for humanity if we fail to act and thus signals a call to action, underscoring the finite resources and fragile state of our planet. The inclusion of ‘Paradise’ in the title refers to another perspective in connecting the topic of climate change with religious and spiritual ideas and appeals to a moral or theological framework for environmental stewardship. Preserving Earth as a paradise is understood in this case as a responsibility entrusted to humanity.

By juxtaposing “No Plan(et) B” (a message of urgency or despair) with “Paradise” (a term associated with hope or idealism), the title explores the tension between crisis and the potential for redemption or transformation. The conference thus invites discussion on how religious beliefs, values, or institutions influence climate action, environmental ethics, and perceptions of sustainability. The subtitle points at the geographical and cultural context of the topic under discussion, in connecting the Dutch context to global perspectives. It highlights both regional and international dimensions of how religiosity and spirituality interact with climate change narratives. Taken together, the title suggests an exploration of how religious worldviews shape responses to climate change, with a specific focus on the Netherlands as a case study while drawing broader implications.

The conference program includes the following components:

### **Keynote Presentations**

Four keynote lectures delivered by internationally renowned experts in the field.

### **Research Project Presentations**

Presentation of findings from the *Research Project on Religion and Climate Change in the Netherlands*, hosted by Tilburg University and funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

### **Thematic Panel Sessions**

Five panel sessions addressing interconnected themes, including:

1. *Sacred Landscapes*
2. *Digitalizing Islamic Environmental Narratives*
3. *Religion-Inspired Climate Skepticism*
4. *Christian Vocabularies in Climate Change Discourses*
5. *Earth Imagery in Times of Climate Change*

### **Keynote Speakers**

*Dr. Joram Tarusarira* is Associate Professor in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands) and does research on the role of religion in conflicts related to climate change in Kenya and the Netherlands. He is co-editor of *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding and Development in Africa* (2023).

*Dr. Stephanie Kaza* is Professor Emerita of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont (USA) and the author or editor of several books on Buddhist environmentalism, among them *Green Buddhism: Practice and Compassionate Action in Uncertain Times* (2019).

*Dr. Celia Deane-Drummond* is Senior Research Fellow in Theology and Director of the Laudato Si Research Institute at Campion Hall (Oxford University) as well as Honorary Visiting Professor in Theology and Science at the University of Durham (UK). Her publications include *Theological Ethics Through a Multispecies Lens* (2019).

*Dr. Arthur Petersen* is Professor of Science, Technology and Public Policy at the University College London (UK), Chief Scientific Adviser to the Dutch Delta Commissioner, and Editor-in-Chief of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. His publications include *Climate, God and Uncertainty: A transcendental naturalistic approach beyond Bruno Latour* (2023).

## 09 October 2025

10:00 – 10:30	Walk-in & Registration
10:30 – 10:45	Opening   Arnold Smeets
10:45 – 12:15	<b>Keynote &amp; Discussion   Gertrudiskapel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Joram Tarusarira:</b> Sacred Worldviews, Climate Change and Related Security Risks: Case Studies from Local Communities in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Kenya</li></ul>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch   <b>Foyer</b>
13:30 – 14:30	<b>Research Group Tilburg   Gertrudiskapel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Caroline Vander Stichele:</b> From Extinction Rebellion to Christian Climate Action: Religious Vocabularies in Climate Change Discourse.</li><li>• <b>Ömer F. Gürlesin:</b> Climate, Religion, and Resistance: Islamic Discourses on Environmental Legislation in Turkish Social Media</li></ul>
14:30 – 15:00	Coffee & Tea   <b>Foyer</b>
15:00 – 17:00	<b>Parallel Sessions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Session I: Sacred Landscapes (Chair: Frank Bosman)   <b>Gertrudiskapel</b></li><li>• Session II: Digitalizing Islamic Environmental Narratives (Chair: Thijl Sunier)   <b>Zocherzaal</b></li></ul>
17:15 – 18:15	Dinner   <b>Foyer</b>
18:30 – 19:30	Musical Intermezzo   <b>Foyer</b>
19:00	Walk-in Public Lecture
19:30 – 21:00	<b>Public Lecture &amp; Discussion   Gertrudiskapel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Celia Deane-Drummond:</b> Environmental Activism and Theological Transformation</li></ul>
21:00 – 22:00	Drinks   <b>Foyer</b>

# 10 October 2025

09:00 – 09:30 Walk-in & Coffee

## 09:30 – 11:00 **Keynote & Discussion | Gertrudiskapel**

- **Stephanie Kaza:** Buddhist Resources for Meeting the Climate Crisis

11:00 – 11:15 Break

## 11:15 – 12:15 **Research Group Tilburg | Gertrudiskapel**

- **Deborah de Koning:** Podcasts and Audio-Walks as Ritual Spaces: Meaning-Making in Times of Climate Change through Pre-Recorded Audio Files
- **Frank G. Bosman:** Holy Sceptics? The Religious Roots of Far-Right Environmental Denial in Northwestern Europe (2020–2024)

12:15 – 13:15 Lunch | **Foyer**

## 13:15 – 15:15 **Parallel Sessions**

- Session III: Christian Vocabularies in Climate Change Discourses (Chair: Caroline Vander Stichele) | **Gertrudiskapel**
- Session IV: Earth Imagery in Times of Climate Change (Chair: Deborah de Koning) | **Zocherzaal**
- Session V: Religion-Inspired Climate Skepticism (Chair: Frank Bosman) | **Willemzaal**

## 15:15 – 16:45 **Keynote & Discussion | Gertrudiskapel**

- **Arthur Petersen:** Religion and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Referencing Religious Beliefs, Values, and Institutions at the Science–Policy Interface

16:45 – 17:00 Closing Remarks

17:00 – 17:30 Drinks

## ABSTRACTS

### Program: 09 October 2025

10:45 – 12:15

**Keynote | Joram Tarusarira**

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Title:** Sacred Worldviews, Climate Change and Related Security Risks: Case Studies from Local Communities in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Kenya

**Abstract:** Climate change poses unprecedented challenges across the Global South. While technoscientific interpretations dominate policy discussions, indigenous and traditional sacred worldviews offer alternative frameworks that fundamentally shape community narratives and responses to climate change. These spiritual perspectives often emphasize holistic relationships with nature and long-term stewardship, contrasting with purely technological solutions and providing valuable insights for culturally grounded climate adaptation strategies. This lecture presents empirical evidence from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Kenya that challenges conventional approaches to climate change and security by foregrounding the sacred worldviews and values guiding community narratives and responses to sustainability and climate-induced disasters. It examines how religious, cultural, and spiritual systems influence interpretations of climate risks and shape adaptive strategies. It draws on extensive fieldwork across three distinct contexts—Nampula Province, Mozambique; post-Cyclone Idai communities in Zimbabwe's Chimanimani District; and Rastafari communities in Kenya's Kibra settlement, employing value-based analytical frameworks, including climate justice and intersectionality. Through participatory methodologies and mixed-method approaches, the study reveals that sacred relationships fundamentally mediate perceptions, narratives, and outcomes of climate security among people, land, and ancestral spirits.

13:30 – 14:30

**PRESENTATIONS RESEARCH GROUP TILBURG**

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Caroline Vander Stichele**

**Title:** From Extinction Rebellion to Christian Climate Action: Religious Vocabularies in Climate Change Discourse

**Abstract:** This presentation discusses the online presence of religious vocabularies in the climate change discourse of two climate action groups that are active in the Netherlands as well as abroad. The two groups are Extinction Rebellion, which is secular, and Christian Climate Action, which is explicitly religious. The analysis is comparative and focuses on texts and images on their websites and social media (X, Instagram, Facebook, and You Tube). It seeks to map flows and differences in the religious vocabularies of these groups. A

discourse analysis is used to better understand the ideological and practical impact of the religious vocabularies that these groups employ in climate change discussions.

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### Ömer F. Gürlesin

**Title:** Climate, Religion, and Resistance: Islamic Discourses on Environmental Legislation in Turkish Social Media

**Abstract:** This paper explores the intersection of religion and environmental politics in contemporary Turkey, focusing on public responses to the country's proposed climate law in the aftermath of its ratification of the Paris Agreement. While Turkey's 2025 Climate Law aimed to formalize the country's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2053, it sparked intense debate not only in parliament and civil society, but also across digital platforms—most notably X (formerly Twitter). Drawing on discourse analysis of social media content, this study investigates how religious language, actors, and worldviews were mobilized both in support of and in opposition to climate legislation. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that in the Turkish context, religion is not a passive backdrop to environmental policy—it is an active, contested arena where theological ethics and socio-political anxieties converge.

## PARALLEL SESSIONS

15:00 – 17:00

### SESSION I: SACRED LANDSCAPES

(chair: Frank Bosman)

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Isabelle Duval**

**Title:** Katy Perry, the Overview Effect, and God: A Battle of Images Between Competing Visual Regimes

**Abstract:** On April 14, 2025, pop icon Katy Perry undertook an 11-minute suborbital journey aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket (flight NS-31), marking the first all-female spaceflight since 1963. While framed as a milestone for gender representation in space exploration, the flight also reveals the spectacle-driven logic of neoliberal capitalism and the commodification of space experiences, particularly the so-called “the overview effect”. Coined by Frank White in 1987, the “overview effect” refers to the deep emotional and cognitive shift that occurs when viewing Earth from space: a “pale blue dot” suspended in space, an image forcing us to acknowledge our shared vulnerability, and reevaluate our relationship to one another and to the planet. Perry's journey offers a striking example of how this transformative view is reduced to mere spectacle by aesthetic capitalism; image replaces substance, our imagination is being hijacked, and travel space is repackaged as entertainment. Less about content and more about how they are used, images become strategic tools shaping desires, beliefs, and cultural narratives. Yet, within this spectacle-driven framework, the sight of Earth hanging in the void in all its fragility holds immense symbolic power. In a fragmented,

hyperconnected world facing ecological and societal collapse, this cosmic perspective can serve as an antidote to information overload and disconnection and offer spiritual clarity and a sense of ecological urgency. This renewed planetary vision invites a deeper reflection on human purpose and responsibility. Because it retains the ability to inspire awe, pause cynicism, and reignite collective wonder, this image of Earth might become a foundational myth of our time, one that transcends religious and cultural boundaries and encourages an “ecosmology” rooted in care for all life. Rather than a luxury for the elite, the “cosmic selfie”, “like an oasis in the desert of infinite space” (Joseph Campbell) should be reclaimed as a sacred reminder of our shared duty to care for one another and the planet.

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### **Vitus Awentemi Adiita**

**Title:** From Creation, through Creation and Back to Creation: An Ethnomusicological Approach to Liturgical Ecology

**Abstract:** This article examines the theology of liturgical songs and how it links liturgy to creation. It reveals the liturgy as a movement from creation, through creation (to God) and back to creation based on empirical data from an ethnographic musicological investigation. It holds that liturgical ecological theology should be studied against the context within which the liturgy is celebrated and not from abstract theological debates. It is a shift from the traditional way of examining the link between liturgy and ecology or the environment through ritual practices and sacramental theology to analysing the local theology of the people expressed in their liturgical songs. The general principles regarding the liturgy and the use of sacred music tend to create an abstract, non-located understanding of worship. On the contrary, diverse ecological factors undeniably impact the celebration of the liturgy. Our environment influences our intellectual, imaginative, spiritual, and social growth. As such, we bring all these aspects influenced by the environment into the liturgical space for worship. Liturgical songs are avenues through which the environmental factor at liturgical celebrations is expressed. This article explores this and how it links the liturgy to the environment.

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### **Subandri Simbolon**

**Title:** Catholicism, Indigenous Religion, and the Environment: A Case Study of the Indigenous Community of Sungai Utik, Kapuas Hulu, West Kalimantan

**Abstract:** Environmental issues involve more than just the destruction of nature; they also have social and spiritual dimensions. Lynn White highlighted this in 1967. He argued that environmental degradation stems from the anthropocentrism found in Christianity. Religion plays a key role as it shapes views that lead humans to exploit nature and each other. Many studies have explored how religious perspectives can guide human-nature relationships. However, these studies often focus on a single religion. This narrow view can overlook the historical power imbalances between different beliefs. In this context, I examine Catholicism and local religions. This research will analyze

how Catholicism and local beliefs relate to the environment. I will explore their perspectives at three levels: individual (I-positions), communal, and institutional. To analyse the data, I will use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) along with articulation theory (Stuart Hall) and Dialogical Self Theory (Hubert Hermans). The goal of this research is to better understand the connection between Catholicism and Indigenous religions regarding ecological issues. I will test the hypothesis that Indigenous religions are more environmentally friendly than Catholicism. This is based on Pope Francis' view that Catholicism can learn from Indigenous communities.

15:00 – 17:00

## SESSION II: DIGITALIZING ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVES

**(chair: Thijl Sunier)**

Room: Zocherzaal

**Willem Flinterman**

**Title:** “Immigrant bread throwers”: The Discursive Context of Bio-digesters at Mosques

**Abstract:** Under the slogan “supernatural: maakt energie van heilig brood” the Mevlana mosque in Amsterdam worked together with a fashionable design collective to design, install and promote a bio-digesting installation to convert old bread into energy for the mosque. Similarly, Muslim party NIDA promoted the installation of bio-digesters at mosques in Rotterdam. This paper will analyze the online representation and framing of these and other initiatives related to food-waste. It will consider the expressive force resulting from the merger of a religiously defined waste-avoiding performativity -- “verspilling past niet in de islam en brood wordt niet graag weggegooid” – with the symbolic currency (i.e. bio-digesters) central to a normative ‘green’ discourse. It will contextualize this specific frame by placing it in a broader field of online confabulation. Of initial importance in this analysis are a number of posts by PVV-associated users denouncing the ‘islamic’ practice of throwing bread leftovers on the street, inferring a causality between “allochtone broodgooiers” and rat infestations. It will be argued that this rhetoric, which is to a degree amplified by the initiatives described above, subliminally puts the blame of deteriorating urban services (waste-management) on the Muslim presence in larger Dutch cities. Ultimately, this argument may serve to show how a disproportionate burden of proof is often put on immigrant communities, when it comes to exhibiting environmentally responsible behavior off- and online.

## Rianne C. ten Veen

**Title:** Faith, Dignity, and Sustainability: Islamic Authority and Values in Climate Engagement

**Abstract:** This paper explores the transformative role of Islamic religious authority and values in addressing the climate crisis, with a particular focus on Europe. Drawing from the author's personal journey—from an environmentalist engaging with Islam post-9/11 to an advocate integrating Islamic ethics into environmental discourse—the paper presents an insider perspective on institutional and grassroots efforts. Institutional engagements include contributions to Ummah4Earth, IFEES, and Stichting Groene Moslims, as well as policy development in INGOs. Individual advocacy is reflected in works such as *199 Ways to Please God* (2009) and participation in the GreenFaith Fellowship. The paper proposes an intersectional model of *maqasid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) as a framework for sustainable development, centered on human dignity. This model identifies six pillars—justice, education, social welfare, environmental stewardship, economic integrity, and public interest—as foundational to Islamic environmental ethics. It further investigates how these values are negotiated and communicated within digital spaces, reshaping environmental advocacy across Muslim communities in Europe.

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## Ahmed Deniz

**Title:** Discourses of Environment Among Muslims: Qualitative Analyses of Reddit Data

**Abstract:** Scholarly interest in the relationships between religion and environmental issues has significantly increased, yet substantial empirical and theoretical gaps remain in understanding Muslim perceptions of environmental issues, particularly within digital spaces. Using social media platform Reddit as the empirical site, this study investigates how environmental phenomena are “defined, framed, and problematized” within English-speaking Muslim online communities (subreddits). These subreddits host written discussions about environmental issues, some exceeding 50,000 members, with the largest having over 360 thousand members as of 2025. Reddit is an important source of empirical data, as it hosts a diversity of religious ideologies. The research specifically examines discourses in defining, framing, and problematizing environmental issues, and the role Islamic environmental notions play in these processes among diverse ideological groups. To achieve this, various narrative threads within discursive struggles and controversies are analysed, drawing from Reiner Keller’s Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD). SKAD provides analytical tools and interpretive frames that are apt for this research, enabling in-depth examination of qualitative data, which includes the forms of knowledge legitimized and the social positions constructed or contested within these digital discourses about environmental issues. The study addresses two core questions: How are environmental issues discursively constructed within Muslim Reddit communities, and what specific role do Islamic notions play in these discursive processes? By exploring these questions, the research aims to illuminate the interplay between diverse discourses and their implications for environmental activism, religious engagement, and scientific communication in digital public spheres.

### Sara Moussalli

**Title:** “Ṣalāḥ versus Fasād: Development of Environmental Interpretation in Modern Tafsir

**Abstract:** Religion is emerging as a powerful force in raising environmental awareness among the public. A growing body of research has been done on Islam specifically, to observe and highlight the relationship it has with the environment. As presented in the portal “Islam and the Environment” produced by the Nature Conservation Center at the American University of Beirut, more than 2000 verses in the Quran present ecological elements linked by scholars to environmental preservation. According to the findings, the modern tafsir of these ecological verses remains largely unexamined. In traditional interpretations, Quranic verses referencing nature were interpreted primarily as Signs of God, whereas modern interpretations increasingly view them as calls to environmental stewardship. A defining feature of modern tafsir is its engagement with social issues—and today, climate change ranks among the most urgent global challenges. Through a qualitative analysis of selected modern tafsir works, this research paper examines the representation of two key ecological terms: ṣalāḥ (reform) and fasād (corruption). The study argues that such interpretations have the potential not only to inform methodological discourse but also to contribute to broader societal engagement with environmental reform in Muslim communities. These insights highlight the evolving function of tafsir as both a spiritual and environmental transformative tool.

19:30 – 21:00

### Public Lecture | Celia Deane-Drummond

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Title:** Environmental Activism and Theological Transformation

**Abstract:** This lecture discusses the key outcomes of a joint research project between Celia Deane-Drummond and colleagues at the University of Manchester, UK, on Religion, Theology and Climate Change. We investigate shifts in theological and ethical perspectives among six groups of environmental activists from Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions in the UK. We used social science engaged theological methods to analyse what motivates these Christian environmentalists, their ecotheological beliefs, and how these are changing in transgressive and innovative ways. Our activists present themselves as prophets or stewards of the planet, with a strong emphasis on soteriological themes. They perceive their own action as having a role in ‘saving the planet’. Theological language including dominion, stewardship, sin, are interpreted in new ways, showing the compatibility of some forms of philosophical personalism with environmental activism.

## Program: 10 October 2025

09:30 – 11:00

**Keynote | Stephanie Kaza**

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Title:** Buddhist Resources for Meeting the Climate Crisis

**Abstract:** Across recent decades, Buddhist philosophy and practice has been popularized and drawn into ethically motivated activist movements, from consumer awareness to climate justice. In addressing the climate crisis, Buddhist thought is well positioned with its foundations in mutual causality or dependent co-arising. Agency and accountability are at the core of ethical responsibility, with nondualistic experience a critical path for awakened insight. In Buddhist psychology, emotional states such as greed, anger, fear are seen as energetic passions that can be transformed for effective protection of human-nature relations. The spiritual potential for liberation from self-centered views is said to be available in every moment and every circumstance. Thus, a key Buddhist teaching and practice is upaya or skillful means, the application of appropriate teachings and actions according to circumstance, agents, and capacity. Among the top arenas for climate action and human behavior change, food practices have some of the greatest potential for Buddhist influence. Examples include the temple cuisine tradition in Japanese religious lineages and the popular vegan movement that draws on mindfulness practice and consumer awareness. In the Western world, Buddhist teachers, leaders, scholars, and activists have much to contribute to interfaith dialogue, religious partnerships, and personal faith practice in support of effective climate response, inviting emergent pathways based in liberation and awakening.

11:15 – 12:15

**PRESENTATIONS RESEARCH GROUP TILBURG**

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Deborah de Koning**

**Title:** Podcasts and Audio-Walks as Ritual Spaces: Meaning-Making in Times of Climate Change through Pre-Recorded Audio Files

**Abstract:** Since ‘the internet’ is accused for its digital footprint, the extensive use of (social) media by climate-engaged people seems a contradiction. Several groups concerned with climate change do however use a variety of (social)media and digital technologies, including digital audio. This article focusses on the role of pre-recorded audio files for meaning-making in times of climate change. It specifically looks at a selection of podcasts and audio-walks as ritual spaces. Ritual spaces are places where rituals take place (Grimes 2014, 257). Ritual spaces have become (increasingly) open spaces where people recast well-known rituals and create new ones. From a ritual criticism perspective I analyze how pre-recorded audio-files play a relevant role as spaces of meaning-making in Western societies. My analysis discloses how in a digitalized world and in an age of extensive climate change alternative ways of meaning making emerge shedding new light on functions of rituals and their contemporary relevance in times of climate change.

**Frank G. Bosman**

**Title:** Holy Sceptics? The Religious Roots of Far-Right Environmental Denial in Northwestern Europe (2020-2024)

**Abstract:** This exploratory study investigates the extent to which religiously grounded climate scepticism features in the public discourse of far-right politicians in Northwestern Europe between 2020 and 2024. The central research question is whether selected politicians can be associated with a form of climate scepticism that is explicitly or implicitly informed by religious ideas, values, or rhetoric. Drawing on publicly available written sources, specifically parliamentary records and social media activity (both personal and party-affiliated), the study examines influential politicians from several European countries. The analysis contributes to emerging interdisciplinary debates on the intersection of religion, political extremism, and climate discourse, drawing insights from political theology, populism studies, and environmental communication. It seeks to shed light on how religious (or religion-like) frameworks are mobilized within far-right narratives to resist or reframe ecological responsibility.

**PARALLEL SESSIONS****13:15 – 15:15****SESSION III: CHRISTIAN VOCABULARIES IN CLIMATE CHANGE DISCOURSES****(chair: Caroline Vander Stichele)****Room: Gertrudiskapel****Dominique-Marcel Kosack**

**Title:** Good Friday for Future? Charismatic Evangelism Between Climate Scepticism and Ecotheology

**Abstract:** The most wide-reaching German-language YouTube videos that address climate change and ecology from a Christian perspective came from Leo Bigger (ICF Zurich) and Johannes Hartl (Augsburg House of Prayer). Both are shaped by a sceptical or even negative attitude towards the ecological movement. This position, in turn, is based on disintegrated-instrumental imaginaries of the relationship between human and non-human nature. In addition, Bigger and Hartl formulate anthropocentric and individualistic narratives of hope. Based on these three core categories - position, imaginary of nature and narrative of hope - the two videos of charismatic speakers are here analysed and furthermore discussed in the context of pentecostal ecotheologies. Indeed, the latter aim to correct theological reductions that are the basis of climate-sceptical Christian evangelism. For this purpose, pentecostal theologians develop, for example, a nature imaginative that assumes the presence of God in the 'spirit-baptised' creation and a hopeful narrative of reconciliation and the end-time completion of non-human nature. With its two simultaneous lines of examination (qualitative-empirical and systematic-theological), my contribution describes an example for the

interaction of climate discourses, religious practice, and theological concepts - as well as for the way in which this interaction can be productively developed.

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### James Crossley

**Title:** Transforming England, the Environment, and the Christian Apocalypse: William Morris in the English Radical Tradition

**Abstract:** The English socialist and designer William Morris (1834–1896) sought to transform the Christian (and specifically medieval Catholic) heritage into the language of Marxist historical materialism. In *A Dream of John Ball*, he secularised the language associated with the so-called Little Apocalypse of Mark 13/Matt. 24 to help explain what the transformation from capitalism to socialism might involve, effectively placing himself in the role of apocalyptic seer. In his subsequent work, *News from Nowhere*, Morris offered a vision of what future transformation might look like in England, with a strong floral and medieval aesthetic. Morris's work and politics were influential after his death though his designs and aesthetics have endured most. This paper will trace these trajectories in thinking about apocalypticism, nature, and the future of an England transformed among some of his interpreters and how such concerns morphed into environmental politics in the latter part of the twentieth century. This will involve some discussion of how Morris was used to navigate the tension between technological advancement and environmental protection in socialist thought.

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### Laura Copier

**Title:** Reimagining the Flood: Eco-apocalyptic Discourse, Climate Change, and the Cinematic Landscape in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*

**Abstract:** The film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012) tells the story of 6-year-old girl named Hushpuppy and her neglectful father as they struggle to survive in the swampy marshland of Louisiana's fictional region called the "Bathtub". After a storm floods the area, the protagonists are evacuated from the area, but Hushpuppy defiantly returns to her deluged home. The film was made on a limited budget and outside the Hollywood mode of production. Rather than focusing on big-budget, action, and spectacular cinematic representations of apocalypse, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* offers alternative representations that help thinking through the ramifications of eco-collapse outside the dominant paradigms. The film tries to reckon with an already happening eco-apocalypse and, crucially, addresses this from the narrative and visual point of view of a marginalized group, in this case a six-year-old child, rather than dominant, white, male protagonists. The film can be interpreted as a reimagined flood story (Genesis 6-9). In my presentation I will start by analyzing how the adaptation of this biblical narrative suggests the film's investment in climate change discourse. After that I will focus on the ways the ruptures and transformations of climate change are visually represented in the film's setting. Martin Lefebvre (2006) argues for the emancipation of landscape in film from its "supporting role as background or

setting” to a narrative into becoming a “completely distinct aesthetic object.” The distinction between nature (which exist independently from humans), landscape (a product of the human interaction between nature and the environment), and setting (story space) is necessary: it enables me to analyze formal and stylistic aspects of cinematographical composition and framing. Eco-apocalyptic cinema, I will argue, is characterized by a recurrent tension between story space (the setting for the narrative) and landscape (when story is halted by spectacular visuals).

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### Ciska Stark

**Title:** God as Gamechanger? Confronting Realities and Theological Imagination in Climate Sermons

**Abstract:** This paper examines the functioning of theological vocabulary and imagery in a series of climate sermons. Using theology of Catherine Keller and others on imagination, we explore and evaluate which references to realities and God’s and human agency are made and how these sermons attempt to effect transformative action by means of imaginative, poetic and symbolic language.

13:15 – 15:15

### SESSION IV: EARTH IMAGERY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE (Chair: Deborah de Koning)

Room: Zocherzaal

#### Nikki Apeldoorn

**Title:** The Gendering of the Earth in Climate Discourse

**Abstract:** The gendering of the earth in climate discourse is widespread and generally accepted without question. A critical gender perspective is therefore important in the field of ecology and environmentalism. The relationship between gender and environmentalism has been most fully explored by the field of ecofeminism. Where some argue that the gendering of the earth as female might have practical or strategic value and can provide a means of identification for humans with nature and a source of empowerment for women, others warn us that these strategies are sometimes counterproductive and precisely reinforcing what they try to combat, by perpetuating oppositional thinking and oppression of both women and the earth. This paper explores the gendering of the earth in the Dutch Climate March of 2023 by analysing protest signs that contain gendered representations of the earth in words and images. The method that is used is a discourse analysis. Three dominating tendencies are revealed, the feminization of the earth, the sexualisation of the earth and the sacralisation of the earth. The paper concludes that representing the earth as female and the human as male reinforces hegemonic patriarchal and heteronormative structures and a logic of dominance and control. In order to depatriarchalize climate discourse, new metaphors are needed that challenge the naturalisation of intersecting oppressive structures and represent a queer and reciprocal, interdependent relation between humans and earth.

## Gerard Kuperus

**Title:** Temporality and Place in the Work of Andy Goldsworthy

**Abstract:** The landscape sculpture of Andy Goldsworthy represents the earth in its temporality – decay and destruction are an essential part of the work as well as the processes of the earth, of which we ourselves are a part. His works disappear with an incoming tide, the increase of temperature, or through processes of decay. He provides a reflection on the relationships between place and temporality. Goldsworthy shows us how places are fabrications, captured in a moment. Goldsworthy, in the process of making, gets to know the materials intimately, and makes us open our eyes to a place in a different way. The landscape we are in is not just a thing we are looking at, but we are a small part of its processes. The artwork is not only the physical alteration of shapes, colors, and arrangements, it is also a challenging of the viewer who is invited to recognize the nomadic nature of the place itself, transitioning along with us. Existentialist thinkers such as Nietzsche have emphasized the artistic element involved in creating ourselves. Our life, then, can be regarded as a work of art. Goldsworthy reminds us that the creative process is full of failures and that anything we make will sooner or later decay and lacks a meaning beyond its temporary existence. The same is true for us: defining ourselves always involves fabrication, is full of failings, and is of a temporary nature.

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## Hans Alma

**Title:** Earth Imagery in the Poem Fragile Earth of Antjie Krog

**Abstract:** 'Fragile Earth of Antjie Krog is an unruly, raw, shocking and beautiful poem, just like the Earth it honours is unruly, raw, shocking and beautiful. Its subtitle is 'A Mass for the Universe'. What inspires the poet to dedicate this poem as a mass to the universe? Is it blasphemous? Does it help us to come to an understanding of man and God that allows us to take care of our planet? For this is the core question and appeal of the poem: how to take care of the Earth and our fellow earthlings. The poem reflects on this question in a stringing together of words and images that don't always speak for themselves. On the one hand, the poem invites us to float along with the power and splendor of what it evokes, on the other hand it brutally disturbs any appearance of loveliness. We don't care enough for one another and the Earth. Especially the Dies irae in the second part of the poem cries out this complaint. We have to face our deficiency, we have to grieve for what is lost already: only when we enter darkness we can find the potential of cosmic healing. In this deeply contemplative approach the religious message of the poem can be found. In my paper, I will reflect on the poem in a way that tries to do justice to its powerful imagery.

**Joyce Rondaij**

**Title:** Can Humans Understand the Earth and Sea? On Giving Voice to Nature

**Abstract:** The climate crisis asks for a new relationship of human beings with nature, one beyond pollution and exploitation. Taking into account the voice of nature, for example in legal matters and in corporate and governmental decision making, is however not an easy undertaking. It are poetic writers who might lead the way here, as this paper will suggest. It studies how Dutch writers Marijken Heitman (De mierenkaravaan) and Arita Baaijens (In gesprek met de Noordzee) give voice to nature while searching for a new relationship with respectively a garden (Heitman) and the North Sea (Baaijens). Both writers are biologists and combine imaginaries from different knowledge traditions in their work: the human and natural voice, biology and poetics, scientific knowledge and spiritual experience. On each of these intersections will be reflected as part of the epistemological question whether and how we can know, and thus give voice to, nature. Special attention will be given to both Baaijens' plea for a broader (non-scientific) understanding of what we mean by 'knowledge', and Heitmans concept of 'mystery'.

13:15 – 15:15

**SESSION V: RELIGION-INSPIRED CLIMATE****SKEPTICISM**

**(Chair: Frank Bosman)**

Room: Willemszaal

**Matthias Kortmann**

**Title:** Climate Skepticism of the AfD in the Bundestag: The Role of Religious Narratives

**Abstract:** This contribution presents the results of a content analysis of climate policy statements by the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in plenary debates of the Bundestag in the 19th and 20th legislative period (2017-2024). The examination reveals a discourse strategy of the party in which climate-sceptic positions, i.e. positions that negate anthropogenic climate change and reject climate protection measures, are embedded in religious narratives. This includes, in particular, the claim that the established parties have submitted to a 'climate religion', which is portrayed in different variations as unscientific, fundamentalist, sectarian or medieval. The narrative form of the 'climate religion' metaphor reflects a classic right-wing populist discourse strategy in which, among other things, a Manichean antagonism between 'good' and 'evil' and a particular anti-elitism become visible.

**Tobias Cinjee, Hanneke Schaap-Jonker, Peter-Ben Smit**

**Title:** Reading Romans 8 in Times of Ecological Crisis: a Small Empirical Study of Young Dutch Reformed Pietists (bevindelijk gereformeerden) Interpreting the Bible

**Abstract:** In previous research on Dutch reformed pietists, we touched upon the topic of ecology but found few explicit ecological narratives in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hypothesized that this absence might be related to climate- and science skepticism among conservatives. However, we had not yet examined how meaning making regarding this particular topic actually takes shape. Hence, in our current study we focus on how young adults from the reformed pietist community make meaning when reading the Bible, specifically in the context of ecological crisis. In two focus groups, 2×6 respondents discuss an initial and contextual reading of Romans 8:18-30. In addition, they answer a brief individual questionnaire. We examine what happens when they match their Biblical interpretations to a context of ecological crisis, and how it affects meaning and identity. Our findings indicate that respondents struggle with questions regarding predestination and human action given God's promise of liberating the suffering 'creature'. When they apply the passage in Romans to concrete everyday life it is sometimes at odds with their initial reading, urging a search for new meanings. Concerning human's responsibility to care for the earth, a 'secular' narrative of malleable action, i.e. 'humans thinking too much of themselves' is considered most troublesome. Yet, respondents give concrete examples of responsibility and Christian stewardship, which are not always in line with typical pietist theology. This result resembles other recent studies which hint towards a discrepancy between beliefs in 'climate narratives' and actual sustainable practice among Dutch conservative Christians.

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**Tanja van Hummel**

**Title:** The Religious Dimension of the Coulisse-Landscape in Northeast Twente, the Netherlands

**Abstract:** The most fundamental question we can ask ourselves today is: How do we see the world, and how do we relate to it? Our answer to this question is the foundation on which we base our worldview and, consequently, our actions. Today we are searching for an answer that will help us to protect the environment so that it can be our common home, as Pope Francis said in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. My research on the religious dimension of the Dutch climate-related conflict on agriculture, nature, and nitrogen showed me how Catholic dairy farmers in Northeast-Twente, a border area in the east of the Netherlands, view the landscape. They distinguish multiple dimensions when talking about the landscape: the economic, the socio-cultural, and the religious dimensions. In theory, these dimensions are separate, but in practice, farmers take a holistic view. In this talk, I will focus on the religious dimension of the landscape. This dimension shows in the architecture of the farms and the roof signs on top, but also in the many church buildings and roadside field crosses, and Our Lady shrines. I will argue that this dimension contributes to the pride farmers have in the landscape they call home.

15:15 – 16:45

**Keynote | Arthur Petersen**

Room: Gertrudiskapel

**Title:** Referencing Religious Beliefs, Values, and Institutions at the Science–Policy Interface

**Abstract:** There seems to be a disconnect between the domains of religion and science in policy discussions on climate change. How religion (religious beliefs, values, and institutions) is framed at the science–policy interface matters. This is especially the case when addressing the impacts of and adaptation to climate change for Indigenous lifeways. It will be shown, in the context of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), how worldviews and religion are crucial elements in addressing climate change. The intergovernmental negotiation process on knowledge about climate change, as organized through the IPCC, will be described. Particular attention will be paid to the way that the IPCC features religious, scientific, and political dimensions in the confrontation that plays out in this organization between Western science and non-modern cultures and worldviews. Bruno Latour’s philosophy will be used to shine a relevant light on the complexity of the various nature/culture constellations that play a role in this confrontation. The talk will feature examples of modern planning for dealing with climate change in the context of non-modern cultures.