



## Perceptions on Climate Change and Religion: A Christian Theological-Functionalist Study

Mandla L. Khumalo<sup>1\*</sup>, Nonhlanhla Dunn<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Queens College, North Carolina, USA.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Education, Mbabane, Eswatini

\*Corresponding Author Email: [khumalomandla906@gmail.com](mailto:khumalomandla906@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Problem:** Climate change requires a communal response including from a religious perspective. There is an increasing debate among scholars about the role of religion in mitigating climate change and whether religion can influence environmental policies. There is also a need to explore perceptions from religious groups and understand their viewpoints on the climate change challenge. .

**Research Purposes:** This study examines perceptions and the role of religion in relation to climate change. It also assesses perceived views from religious groups on how climate change can be addressed. The study argues that while it is not conclusive whether religious identity can expedite the control and acceptance of anthropogenic and scientific climate change, perhaps it can help bring fresh insights. What are perceptions towards climate change and religion? What is the role of religious institutions in the drive to combat climate change? These are the two questions the study tried to contribute answers to. This study also aims to get insights on the perceived eschatology theory as propagated by religion.

**Research Methods:** Data were derived from 35 participants from the Christian faith. Participants were between the ages of 18 – 56 in range. Following a theological and functionalist framework data was analysed using thematic approach. The data was transcribed and coded to produce themes. Themes were categorized through grouping similar codes.

**Results and Discussion:** The study revealed that Christians perceive religion as important in addressing climate change effects. The potential for religion to influence climate change policies remain unfulfilled. Christian views identified climate change as anthropogenic, divine and eschatological. While scientific models were not rejected, the results revealed that scientific models separate of spirituality bring temporal solutions.

**Research Implications and Contributions:** At the policy level, governments should consider religion and how religious insights can be infused into state policies. Church leaders must continue to create climate change awareness in their meetings.

**Keywords:** Climate change, religion, the church, stewardship, eschatology, theological, functionalist.

### INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a challenge that persists despite efforts to counteract it. It is a phenomenon which has led to environmental degradation and caused a notable threat to human well-being and sustainability (Martiny-Bruun, 2020). Noor et al (2025) defines climate change as unforeseen changes in the environment such as temperature and precipitation patterns which exceed the average atmospheric condition. These changes are caused by natural factors such as orbit of earth's revolution, crustal movement, the increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases and volcanic activities (Li et al., 2022; Ridder et al., 2022). It has complex impact on the

environment, agriculture productivity, biodiversity, economies, religion, and politics (Owusu et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2021). Scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been presented in different platforms and such evidence is recognized globally. Consequently, the world has become more aware of the phenomenon of climate change and realizes that it cannot be avoided (IPCC, 2021). Half of the most severe global risks such as extreme weather patterns, biodiversity loss, and harm to the environment, anticipated in the next decade are highly linked to climate change (McLennan, 2022). Studies have shown that the most contributors to climate change are factors that transform the Earth's surface. These include human anthropogenic activities such as building cities, machinery, deforestation, mining, drilling, construction, agriculture and burning fossil fuels (Magnan et al., 2021; Noor et al., 2025; Owusu et al., 2025).

For example, scholars propose that human drainage system from cities results in water contamination and affects human well-being. In cities as opposed to rural areas, there are more energy generating machines, heavy vehicles and other road materials which absorb the energy and re-emit thermal energy into the environment (Sidiropoulos, 2023; Noor et al., 2025). All this machinery and other complex contributors such as natural causes, solar variability, and orbital changes, pose a threat to the environment and require urgent interventions to address (Azi, 2025; Noor et al., 2025). Anthropogenic actions of humanity are mostly driven by a desire for betterment of life, enhancement of economies without the consideration of the impact of their actions on the environment (Nche, 2023). The protection of the environment is essential in ensuring the well-being and sustainability of humanity (Hossain et al., 2024). Climate change has complex effects on the environment and human well-being. These include land degradation, air quality, increases risks of infectious diseases, food security and soil quality (Zulfa, & Septiana, 2024; Wagener et al., 2022). Climate change also contributes to global migration and conflicts. People, who have been displaced by extreme weather conditions, are forced to relocate to safer locations. When that transpires, it contributes to poverty, unemployment and inequality (UN, 2023; Martiny-Bruun, 2020). Additionally, climate change has contributed to prolonged drought conditions, land degradation, wildfires propagated by strong winds, extreme heat, heavy violet storms, and extreme cold conditions including heavy snow in some parts of the world (Sadowski, 2021). The drought and cold affects agricultural productivity and poses a threat to the sustainability of wild animals. Violet storms lead to loss of lives and destruction of property (Nche, 2023). The rise in climate change requires an integrated multi-sectoral approach to address including from a religious perspective (Hearn et al., 2023; Azi et al., 2025; Nche, 2023).

While there is a growing interest among scholars to examine the impact of climate change, few studies explore the coherence between religion and climate change. Similarly, few studies explore religious perceptions from a Christian perspective to get an in-depth understanding of the role of religion in supporting state policy. Furthermore, not many studies examine the eschatological thought in analyzing climate change. This study bridges that gap through addressing Christian perceptions and the role of religion in the drive to address climate change using a theological-functionalist approach. Consequently, the research questions for this study are: i) What are the perceptions towards climate change and religion? ii) What is the role of religious bodies in the drive to combat climate change? Through grounding this study to religion, it offers a theological-functionalist framework to understand the functions of individual Christians, religious groups as a whole, and their perceptions on climate change. The central argument for this study is that a religious discourse can contribute valuable insights to state policy instruments. This research contends that the religion can bring spiritual insights to the problem of climate change. The divine insights can be infused with the scientific models to draw lasting and sustainable solutions. It also analyses the eschatological theology as propagated by religion in trying to understand the causes of the phenomena.

Drawing from the creationist theory, the environment has its roots entrenched in the theological framework. The creationist theory states that the beginning started with the creation of heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Consequently, the environment exists because of that created order. The theological framework suggests that human beings were created and entrusted to be stewards of the environment (Genesis 1:28). Ultimately, congregates believe that they are to care for the environment (Jenkins et al., 2018). Believers are against the degradation of the environment. This is partly because climate change poses a threat on religious practices, rituals, and reliefs, requiring adaptations actions (Owusu et al., 2025). The functionalist perspective is based on the role of religion and its place in the social and environmental management. This perspective is justified in this study because it aligns with social order, and the defense of human interests such as climate change, human rights and responsibilities in the created order (Naikoo & Hajam., 2025).

Climate change operates in a cyclic system which constitutes sub-systems that include the environment, its natural ecosystem, and the earth's structure. Humanity and the environment have lived and shared a synergetic relationship on earth. Naturally, humanity, the environment and the divine cannot be separated (Hulme, 2022). The belief that the earth and humanity are products of the divine makes the environment and humanity interconnected. A change in the environment affects human well-being and sustainability (Martiny-Bruun, 2020). The environment is a huge component of reflection in many religious institutions. Religious institutions view nature as God's creation which plays a symbolic role (Alper, 2022). According to Owusu et al. (2025) religious organizations continue to contribute towards curtailing climate change and acknowledge the urgent need to address its impact on humanity. This is because the environment is associated with a way to experience or connect with the divine (Rubow, 2022). In Christianity for example, natural resources such as water are predominantly used for varying purposes. In religion water symbolizes purification and life. Christians use water for baptism and for other purification purposes (Ezekiel 36:25-26; Matthew 3:11-16). After praying for water, the water is referred to as holy water which is used to heal illnesses, purify against demonic attacks, and cleanses against any evil induced spirits (2 Kings 5:1-14, Mahlalela & Khumalo, 2025). Climate change affects the sustainability of this resource and causes threats to its cycle and quality. Similarly extreme weather patterns like prolonged drought reduces the availability of surface water, affecting the well-being of humanity and religious ritualistic practices (Zulfa & Septiana, 2024).

Many rituals are done in different religions and there are propositions that religion serves to bridge humanity to their environment through the usage of rituals. Some rituals are used to mark the rhythm of seasonal changes, to express gratitude for a successful harvest and rituals are also used to repel destructive natural forces including that of climate change (Schuman et al., 2018). The relationship between human and the environment vary from one religion to the next (Owusu et al., 2025). While this study is based on the Christian faith, it is important to explore a bit about other religions and their belief actions. Some religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism practice the veneration of Hydro theological water beings which symbolize the sea's agentive powers. These are serpentine water beings and these serpents are suggested to have the ability to consume human lives, threaten the stability of societies and destroy nature if angered (Strang, 2023).

The Buddhism and Hinduism's veneration of serpentine water beings is associated with spirituality, cultural, humanity, and ecological beliefs (Swargiary, 2024). Some religious individuals from various religions are portrayed to get powers from these serpentine beings and have to make continuous sacrifices and ritualistic offerings. If such sacrifices are not done right, these water beings can institute disaster through severe cyclonic storms (Ete, 2023; Manna, 2024). Therefore the worship of such serpentine water beings is labeled as a danger to the

environment. These serpents can be destructive to nature particularly if the ritualistic offerings are overlooked or not done right angering these ocean deities (Strang, 2023; Ete, 2023; Manna, 2025). Biblical narratives also support this idea of serpentine water beings. In the annals of Job, God was documented as speaking to Job about leviathan the sea serpent. The book of Job details how leviathan spits fire and nothing has similar strength to this serpent (Job 41:1-34). These serpents are viewed as capable to contribute to climate change. This calls for enhance ethics and environmental governance in religion and the regulation of religious groups to control or monitor extremes in ritualistic practices (Manna, 2025). The Christian theological framework is against the worship of foreign deities (Exodus 20:3). A balance in religious practices requires ethical standards and regulations aimed at protecting humanity and the environment. This necessitates a need for effective religious and climate governance which requires meaningful and continuous engagements from all stakeholders.

Climate change is quickly becoming a subject of interfaith collaboration. Scientific elites have called upon cooperation between religion and science in addressing climate change (Owusu et al., 2025). Religious organizations are becoming more involved in the climate justice movement. Religion shapes people's values, morals, and their association to the environment (Akoto, 2025). This quality makes them capable to contribute in mitigating climate change leading to a more environmentally friendly society (Koehrsen et al., 2023). However, some studies have shown that religious groups may disengage and be skeptical to be involved in the climate change crisis (Hearn et al., 2023; Veldman et al., 2021). The sceptical groups attribute climate change to God and suggest that solutions are rooted in prayer (Bjork-James, 2023). This necessitates a need for further awareness creation among religious institutions and further analysis of the relationship between state and religion (Ergun et al., 2024; Hearn et al., 2023).

Christianity in the context of this research refers to the called out body of people believing or having faith in God. It is a term drawn from the Greek word "ekklesia" which means 'called out' (Graves, 2020). On the other hand, religion can be defined as beliefs, guidelines of conduct and rites governing relationships of humanity with divine powers (Martiny-Bruun, 2020). It can arguable be construed that the church is a group of people who practice religion or believe in the supernatural. However, Christians believe that the church is those people who follow and are called by Jesus Christ (1Timothy 3:14-15; John14:6). In this research the words church and religion are used interchangeably. Religion has a strong influence in human existence and strongly shapes viewpoints, cultures and interaction globally. Religion provides frameworks for handling relations between humanity, the environment and the supernatural (Agusalim & Karim, 2023). Some scholars suggest that religion has an adaptable and progressive role in stimulating societies. They posit that religion should be included in collaborative climate change initiatives (Nche, 2023; Owusu et al., 2025). The role of religion then becomes to provide biblical insights on environmental matters in the effort to conserve the environment. Religious groups depict the entire universe as belonging to God (Adigun, 2025). If that is true, then religion should be the driving force in the environmental protection efforts as they preach the gospel of care for God's creation (Martiny-Bruun, 2020; Adigun, 2025).

Through Eco-theology teaching, environmental campaigns and environmental ethics, the church has the potential to progress efforts of environmental control (Kiarie, 2020). Additionally, climate change awareness creation to congregates, the church can highly influence climate change policies (Hearn et al., 2024). In the Biblical disposition a theory that is predominately used by Christians, humanity was given the responsibility to care for the environment. The adherence to biblical writings has resulted in the concept of divinely ordained balance in the environment with all things proportionally in place (Lowe et al., 2023). As guardians humanity has the responsibility to be good stewards of the environment and make strides to prevent or control climate change through behavioral change and other globally

instituted initiatives. If the church respects God, then the church is also called to respect his creation including the environment (Adigun, 2025).

Climate change has presented an opportunity for reformation, conversion and renewal of mindsets. These three aspects require theological reflection and the consideration of the prospect of the eschatological nurture of the religion. It is very difficult to speak of religion separate of the eschatological theology (Lowe et al., 2023; Van Den Heuvel, 2025). The involvement of the church in climate change initiatives is therefore bound to include theological analysis featuring the eschatological perspective. Considering the slow progress in finding solutions to mitigate climate change, this study argues that maybe a spiritual disposition becomes something to be considered. In recognizing God as the creator, owner and sustainer of environment can bring fresh insights to how climate change is perceived. Looking at God as the source of supply and helper requires reliance on His principles (Mahsun et al., 2025; Azi, 2025). Combining scientific solutions with spirituality in the sense of relying on God's principles on how to govern the environment may be what climate catastrophists and democratic citizenries need to draw lasting solutions from (Hearn et al., 2024). However, some scholars argue that religious individuals may not always implement environmental protection strategies (Torabi & Noori, 2019; Hearn et al., 2024). This could be based on the belief that climate change is a sign of the end times predicted by biblical narratives (Mark 13:30-32; Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:14).

The Jewish and Christian religions which are assumed to be influenced by Zoroastrianism, are some religions that believe in eschatological accounts as drawing their beliefs in biblical texts (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:24-27). Traditionally, eschatology refers to the theological examination of the ultimate end of all things and the fulfillment of God's work in the world. It is a theological concept researchers are keen to understand. It helps in building a relationship between divine, nature and human purpose in life and also impact on understanding the future (Ekeke & Ekpenyong, 2024). In a theological framework, climate change is associated with the end time theology (Humairoh et al. 2024). Human existence, whether on individual or societal level will eventual come to an end and the universe will assume a different cosmic state. These necessitate a deep exploration of the destiny of individuals after their demise. Eschatology then involves both the cosmic and personal facets. Cosmic eschatology relates to the destiny of the humanity after death, and the entirety of the end of the world. On the other hand personal eschatology has more to do with death and the human experiences after death (Van Den Heuvel, 2025). Biblical narratives highlight some of the signs of the end of all things such as earthquakes, famine and wars. Religions draws their arguments from the biblical narratives and conclude that the earthquakes, famines, rise in temperatures are signs of biblical predictions (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11; Dankanich, 2022). Nche (2023) argues that the Pentecostal standpoint on end-time theology suggests their narrow stance on pro-environmental green theology involvement.

Christians anticipate that there will be a judgment day by an Omniscient Power after the cosmic eschatology and humanity will have to account for their actions while still on earth (Agujiobi et al. 2022). Religious institutions explicate that all creation shall come to an end. The creation theory mostly relies on theological belief and doctrines. The evolution concept relies on pseudo-science exploration on mutable world biogenesis, chemistry and geology. Creationism is most characterized by the Creator- God theory while the evolutionary is epitomized by the theory of evolution of natural selection. The creation theorists believe that humanity, the earth and all other species on earth are as a result of supernatural acts and see God as the creator of everything on earth (Woodruff; 2021; Gen 1:1). Some scholars have supported the creationism theory and believe the eschaton concept of life. Religion then is associated with the creation theory and ultimately associate climate change with the theological eschatology based on the biblically documented signs of the end of the world. Such signs include

wars, incurable illnesses, natural disasters and the anticipation of the Anti-Christ (Izidor & Igwe, 2022).

This descriptive study examined perceptions and the role of the church in relation to climate change. It was approached from a theological subjective and the functionalist approach from a Christian perspective. The functionalist perspective emphasizes religion's capability to assist people deal with loss of property, life and diminishing health which is more prevalent as storms intensify and weather patterns become more impulsive and also understand their role in handling the phenomena (Sachdeva 2016). The functionalist approach defines principles that drive dynamics, functionality and progression of things. It uses functionalist knowledge to manage worldly happenings and ascertains the how and why a phenomenon happens (Gómez-Diago, 2020). The theological-functionalist perspective was deemed to be relevant in this study because it emphasizes collaboration and cooperation from different aspects of society in order to attain social needs and assess challenges (Naikoo & Hajam, 2025). From this lens environmental stability is essential in ensuring social balance. An increase in climate change affects food security, health, economic growth and consequently disrupts social balance. Functionalist scholars argue that there is a need for adaptation to climate change through the implementation of relevant policy instruments, technological innovations and awareness creation (Wilson, 2021). In religion, the functionalist theory emphasizes how religious beliefs and practices contribute to social balance and cohesion (Thompson, 2018). The main function of religion is its contribution to meeting social stability through creating social solidarity, and integration of various aspects of society including addressing climate change issues (Naikoo and Hajam, 2024). This makes the functionalist relevant in this study. Semi-structured interviews were carried out from 35 participants who were from the Christian faith. Participants were between the ages of 18 – 56 in range. A low number of participants is justified in a descriptive study because it sorts to understand perceptions rather than dwelling much on statistical analysis (Neuert et al., 2021). The participants were purposively selected, 24 (69%) were males and 11 (31%) were females. The focus was on getting their perspective and their opinion in relation to what their role should be in association with the research issue. Beliefs, causes and roles were used as tools to discuss participants' opinions on climate change and religion. These tools assisted in processing new knowledge on participants' perceptions of climate change and religion. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Some participants were interviewed in person. Other data was collected through sending the questionnaire through emails to identified prospective candidates. The criteria used to source participants were based on their religious affiliations and their qualifications. Some were environmentalists and others were theologians all from the Christian denomination. Data was analyzed using thematic approach. The data was transcribed and coded to produce themes. Themes were categorized through grouping similar codes. Further content analysis was used and three main themes emerged. To ensure validity and reliability, the transcribed data was sent to the participants before final analysis were made to certify the researcher's interpretation matched their experiences. For ethical reasons participants' names were not included in the discussions to protect their confidentiality. All participants signed a consent form and participation was voluntary.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Perceptions on the phenomenon of climate change**

All participants confirmed knowledge of climate change and acknowledged the effects it has on humanity. A Relatively high number of participants (78%) were worried about climate change. However, some seemed to be more worried about other issues such as gender based violence (GDB), world instability propelled by wars and diseases, poverty, and inequality in

societies. Similarly, some participants appeared more inclined to enhancing their spiritual nourishment to increase their faith in God and helping others who are poverty stricken and vulnerable groups. Participants (66%) saw climate change as a threat to God's perfect creation. They noted that the earth is a home for both humanity and animals. This findings is substantiated by Kabongo & Stock (2022) who called upon adaptation strategies amidst climate change to protect the earth which is a dwelling place for humanity. Therefore climate change poses a threat to this magnificent creation and also leads to increased conflicts and hunger (Koehrsen et al., 2022). Participants emphasized the need to strengthen agricultural productivity to ensure food security. Similarly, some participants (43%) revealed that, the poor suffer the most as a result of climate change and yet have done little if anything at all to contribute to climate change. The displacement of humanity caused by severe storms, drought and the eruption of volcanoes was seen as a threat to vulnerable groups.

Participants regarded the vast number of immigrants from less privileged states to better developed countries as partly a result of climate change to some extent. This migration of humanity causes conflicts between countries and the entire world (UN, 2023). Migration of people was portrayed as both a threat and an opportunity for the development of the world. It is an opportunity for advancement of countries particularly if skilled labour migrates. However, some participants averred that as a skill drain for the less developed nations which may results in more challenges for them. Martiny-Bruun (2020) also reported similar findings suggesting that climate change results in mass migrations.

Some participants (57%) revealed that countries are instituting stringent immigration laws to reduce the influx of migrants. Climate change was regarded by most participants as leading to crime as a result of unemployment and poverty. The agriculture sector employs a huge number of people in different countries. With climate change stifling this sector, more people are bound to lose their jobs and resort to criminal activities due to hunger. This finding is line with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) campaign which states that millions of farmers worldwide who rely on their ability to grow and harvest crops have been greatly affect by climate change. The CRS notes that climate change does not only negate agricultural production, but also destroys homes, displaces families, escalates criminal activities, causes economic instability and inequality (CRS, 2022).

Most participants (75%) averred that climate change is an act of God and is unavoidable. They suggested theological and spiritual maturity which will make people more receptive to God. To them, God has the solutions for the world (Matthew 11:28-30; Proverbs 19:21). Participants emphasized that God is the one who protects humanity and can bring recovery from the effects of the phenomenon. They further suggested that humans are becoming more rebellious and refuting the power of God. Consequently, God opts to institute disasters in the world as a way to bring humility to humans. One participant said:

*"We were created by God and therefore are subject to Him. If we ignore Him, what can we expect? It's high time that we acknowledge Him and turn away from our wicked ways. We see an increase in people openly professing their atheist nature and are refuting the very creator who created the earth and put the people on it to enjoy His creation. He is highly capable of allowing calamity to befall us if we ignore Him"* [Participant F].

Seemingly participants see climate change as God acting in anger against the rebellion of humanity to reverence Him. God's ability to act in anger and bring disastrous events appeared to be congruent amongst participants. Participants acknowledged the need for scientific approaches in addressing climate change, however they emphasized that such solutions are only temporal. They thought that lasting solutions can be drawn directly from God through prayer

and worship. Without prayer the world was viewed as a world in ruins. This finding aligns with Bjork-James (2023)'s research which recommended prayer in supplementing scientific models. It became evident that while participants encouraged scientific models, they were more inclined towards spiritual solutions than scientific models. Participants suggested that the engineering of heavy industrial machinery, big cars and the usage of coal in generating electricity as contributors to air pollution. An unclean atmosphere was viewed as causing imbalance in the environment. This finding aligns with other studies which reported that machinery and other technological innovations contribute to climate change and cause environmental imbalance (Wilson & Vasile, 2023; Khumalo, 2025; Magnan et al., 2021). One participant said;

*"It's funny because the world is trying to control climate change and yet continue to develop machinery that emits a lot of dangerous gases. These gases are not only endangering the environment, but are also a danger to us as human beings. The air we rely on is no longer safe for our health because of pollution. With all these gases cause diseases of which we don't know about and hard to control. Who knows, maybe the increase death rate due to unknown causes reported by doctors is as a result of the polluted environment. I have heard of people just collapsing and dying without being diagnosed of any illness. While engineering and technology is good for the advancement of the world, maybe there should be harsh policies on what is allowed to be developed. Only machinery that causes less risk to environmental pollution should be certified. One way or another, humanity is responsible for this change weather patterns."* [Participant K].

The above statement associates human actions with climate change. In the process of advancing the world and bringing ease for humanity, such technological advancement was viewed as endangering the environment and in the process contributing to the environmental collapse (Owusu et al., 2025). Participants advocated for strong policies against engineering machinery that produce polluting substances. While some policies are in place, some participants (23%) revealed that such policies are by-passable for the rich. The rich were seen as contributing more to gas emissions because they can buy their way into developing any machinery they desire to. Additionally, some participants (18%) suggested that overpopulation has the potential to damage the environment. Their thinking was that due to overpopulation, there has been an increase in waste production, building of homes, and an increase in agricultural production. According to participants waste management systems are not always effective. Waste end up being dumped anywhere causing a threat to life and it also pollutes the air. Akoto (2025) encouraged community, and church engagement and participation in proper waste disposal. Deforestation was also an element the participants alluded to. The destruction of forests, natural flora and fauna was seen as disruptive to the environment. A lot of deforestation and destruction of other natural flora in a bid to establish human structures is on the increase. Such destruction of natural flora and fauna leads to a lot undesired environmental degradations (Mihajlović & Đorđević, 2022; Magnan et al., 2021).

**Table 1. Key findings**

Theme	Findings
Perceptions on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants expressed worry about climate change viewing it as a threat to God's created order.</li> <li>○ Climate change was viewed as unavoidable act of God and a divine action against human rebellion.</li> <li>○ Participants acknowledged human actions as contributors to climate change.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Climate change was associated to eschatology, viewing it as a sign of the end times and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.</li> <li>○ Climate change contributes to poverty and mass migration</li> </ul>
<b>Role Of Religion and solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ While scientific solutions were not rejected, participants emphasized that purely scientific solutions are temporal.</li> <li>○ Participants believe that lasting solutions require combining scientific models with spiritual disposition.</li> <li>○ Reliance on God through prayer and worship was suggested.</li> <li>○ Participants supported the human responsibility to care for the environment, embracing the concept of stewardship derived from the creationist theory.</li> <li>○ Participants viewed environmental protection as necessary for the sustainability of humanity.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants promoted awareness creation and implementation of environmental policies.</li> <li>○ Governments should acknowledge religion and infuse insights into state environmental protection policies.</li> <li>○ Faith leaders were encouraged to continue to create climate change awareness to their members.</li> <li>○ Faith leaders should develop adaptation programs in collaboration with environmentalist and the state.</li> </ul>

### Theological and Eschatological thought

Most participants (87%) revealed that nothing happens on earth without the knowledge of God. He was labeled as the all-knowing God who allows situations and also has the power to control disasters (Psalms 139:1-4; Isaiah 46:10). After all humanity and the earth were created by Him and nothing is hidden to Him (Genesis 1:1). This finding aligns with biblical text which validates that God is greater than human hearts and He knows everything (1 John 3:20). In light of that, participants averred that the remedies to curb climate change are known by Him. Consequently they thought that in seeking climate change mitigation strategies, environmental catastrophists should not act separate of the spiritual. Most participants mentioned that the inclusion of religious groups in policy making can yield beneficial results as religious groups have the power to communicate with God through prayer (Owusu et al., 2025; Khumalo, 2025; Philippians 4: 6-7). The results of this study further revealed that if religious groups are included in discussions, they have the capability to seek solutions from God through prayer. Participants portrayed God as the ultimate source of wisdom enabling humans to act in certain ways and He has the power to reveal mysterious solutions of which if He was not

consulted, such solutions would never be known. This finding is substantiated by biblical text which states that God has the capacity to reveal great and hidden things if believers call upon Him (Jeremiah 33:3). Additionally, participants (56%) highlighted that the greatest ideas implemented by humanity were revealed spiritually to certain people either through dreams, visions, His word or just thoughts. The people who come up with greatest ideas were regarded as getting such ideas from God who is the one who gave humanity the power to reason (Kgatle, 2025). Therefore, participants suggested that He is highly capable to reveal solutions in addressing the climate change crisis.

Humanity was portrayed as spiritual in nurture and one way or another every human being has God's spirit in them. Christian participants cited Genesis 2:7 in validating their statement that every human being has God's Spirit in them. The verse states that; *'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul' (Genesis 2:7)*. The Bible proposes that there is no life without the spirit of God. The man became a living soul after receiving God's breath.

*"We have a tendency to think it's our intelligence that makes us develop great ideas or sophisticated technologies. God is the one who allows such intelligence, therefore great business ideas or concepts are products of God. If God never gave us the brains and wisdom, the world would not be so advanced today. The intelligence of scientists, environmental experts and politicians is not only rooted in books, but it comes from God. After all He is the one who gave the original writers of books and developers of subject matters like philosophy, mathematics, economics and politics the wisdom to develop such subject matters. Today people study such fields because of the wisdom given to the first initiators of the various study fields. We cannot therefore attribute gaining knowledge as stemming from only studying books and neglect the giver of wisdom."* [Participant, H].

The above statement reveals an interesting analysis of human intelligence. It was discovered that people don't necessarily get intelligence only through inherited genes and studying, but intelligence is an artifact which comes from God. Participants argued that even if someone is assumed to have inherited good genes from his parents, the question is where the parents got such genes themselves. This finding aligns with Woodruff (2021) whose findings suggest that intelligence and the human DNA come from God. Woodruff argues that intelligence or DNA should not be genetically modified. Modifying created order is against moral structures and unethical (Deuteronomy 4: 2; Revelations 22:18-19).

Interestingly some participants reveal that if intelligence was only inherited from parents, it would mean that everyone would be intelligent assuming that every human being has roots to the first man Adam. Adam and Eve are portrayed as the first people God created, therefore every human being supposedly has that original blood from Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26-27). The concept of inherent genes was portrayed as having very little to do with intelligence, but true intelligence comes from God who is the creator of humanity and He gives it to different people as He determines (1 Corinthians 12:8). Human beings were assumed to study and do well in different field because of that God given intellectual ability which enables them to understand what is inscribed in books. It was argued that if humanity seeks to get intelligent ideas about controlling climate change, such wisdom should be found in God. They surmised that religious groups have that potential to seek wise solutions from God Himself as they communicate with Him on a daily bases following biblical commands (1Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Most participants (76%) associated climate change with eschatology which is the end time of the world (Bonhoeffer, 2025). The apocalyptic epoch was synonymous amongst all participants. They viewed climate change as a sign of the end of the world. The participants noted that this phenomenon was the fulfillment of the eschatological prophecy (Daniel 12:4;

Matthew 24:14). It was revealed that divine prophecy always comes to pass and was unavoidable. The fact that the world was created by God and through various prophetic figures predicated that it would come to an end was highlighted. Participants further mentioned some of the signs documented in scriptures which include incurable illnesses, disasters, wars and pride (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). The world was seen as having a lot of pride whereby human beings now exalt themselves above the creator (2 Timothy 3:1-5). They suggested that human beings seem to have forgotten that life was given by God and is only borrowed. Participants mentioned that all humanity and everything on earth have a time to live and a time to diminish. In theological perspective the world was created to last for a certain season and then come to an end (Izidor and Igwe 2022). A new earth which supersedes judgment was envisioned by participants. However, Nche (2023) argues that the Christian standpoint on end-time theology suggests their narrow stance on pro-environmental green theology involvement. Similarly, some scholars argue that religious individuals may not always implement environmental protection strategies partly because of their belief that climate change is a sign for the end of times (Torabi & Noori, 2019; Hearn et al., 2024). Supporting the eschatology view-point, one participant said;

*“God foretold through scripture that the earth was to come to an end. Therefore, climate change should by no means puzzle us. God mentioned that it would happen and it will be a sign that the end is near. Our role is to continue to trust Him in spite of what we see. It is highly impossible to alter God’s foretold events. Human beings have a tendency to forget or neglect spiritual predictions. That is our problem right there. We think we know it all, when in actual fact we know very little. We are all subject to God and to His plans for our life and his plans for His creation,” [Participant X].*

The above statement suggest that human efforts only buy time, but when the time comes all prophetic prediction must come to past (Ezekiel 12:23). Religious groups were encouraged to make strides to adhere to what God instructs them to do in readiness for the Messianic age. Participants acknowledge that no one knows the time or the hour, but they keep a watchful eye to this Messianic age. Climate change was viewed as very hard to control if symbolizes a sign of the end times. A number of Christian participants (89%) suggested prayer and fasting as a solution to appease God while waiting on the inevitable end. However, participants were not against any scientific models to address climate change. They demonstrated willingness to participate in any way possible to mitigate climate change.

### **Environmental protection and the role of the religion**

While most participants acknowledged the difficulty in controlling climate change, they saw no harm in trying to protect the earth as they are guardians of the earth. Participants (67%) suggested that the church should be involved in climate change mitigation efforts through promoting an Eco-theology gospel. This finding aligns with Kiarie (2020) who highlighted the importance of awareness creation and promotion of eco-theology among religious organisations. Prayer was also recommended by most participants emphasizing that prayer changes things and religious congregates were encouraged to pray over climate change. Biblical narratives state that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16). Similarly, Matthew 21: 22 indicates that whatsoever it asked in prayer and belief shall be received. Ultimately participants revealed that some of the much needed solutions were entrenched in prayer and acknowledging the divine. Leaders of religious organizations were seen as the ones with high influence to create awareness of climate change and promote the protection of nature among congregants (Akoto, 2025). While some participants thought climate change was a sign of the end times, they seemed to appreciate the scientific methods in place and they were not entirely against any effort to mitigate climate change. Additionally, while emphasis was on prayer

and envisioning the Messianic age, participants seemed to promote strengthening of environment policies in the attempt to reduce environmental degradation (Hearn et al., 2024). One theologian participant said;

*“My first priority is to acknowledge God, but I am not at all against any efforts done by governments and environmental activists to protect the environment. I don’t know when the end of the world will come, it might be years. That makes it a sensible idea to make means to protect the environment. I don’t want my children to die of hunger because of lack of food. Seeing that climate change affects agricultural production, I strongly support any efforts to control climate change. I believe that religious people are becoming more aware of the effects of climate change. I am human first and then I practice religion as human being. So what affects other people is bound to affect me too. I am willing to partake in any suggested theological and scientific efforts.” [Participant X]*

In light of the above statement, religious institutions are less likely to oppose environmental protection efforts. Participants appeared to favor scientific models to some extent. They believe that human beings must protect God’s creation at all costs and not only be confined to theological beliefs (Torabi & Noori, 2019; Hearn et al., 2024).

Climate change was seen as a threat to agricultural production of which that can increase hunger and propel poverty (Magnan et al., 2021; Mahlalela & Khumalo, 2025). In that respect participants acknowledge the need to make efforts to protect the environment for the sustainability of humanity. This finding resonates well with the Vos (2025)’s disposition. According to Vos (2025) religion plays an important role in the current ecological management as a result of being human stewards of the environment. Similarly Vos suggests that religion is open to exploration and colonization of the earth and its people. The broad theological understanding of the environment is not limiting religion to spirituality but also acknowledge the earth as God’s creation which humanity was entrusted to care and protect (Vos et al. 2022). Some participants (67%) proposed an introduction of environmental subjects in schools. They believe that if children are sensitized at an early age, they are more likely to respect the environment in their old age. Participants attested to the fact that religious leaders are increasingly encouraging their members to embrace the weather patterns and be environmentally friendly while practicing their faith in the divine God.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined perceptions and the role of the Christian religion in addressing climate change. it highlighted key insights into the understanding of religion and how it can contribute to state policies. The theological framework for addressing climate change is grounded on ethical principles shaped by the obligations of stewardship, and justice. Christians acknowledged the close relationship between humans and the environment. Christian views identified climate change as anthropogenic, divine and eschatological. The human responsibility to care for the environment was supported embracing the stewardship role. The results revealed that religion shaped impressions concerning the relationship and the role of congregates about the environment. Religious models of climate change appeared more preferred to scientific ones. However, scientific models were not negated and were seen to be very helpful. The results of this study further suggest that when combined scientific models and spirituality can help bring new perspectives in addressing climate change. Participants highlighted that while seeking solutions to combat climate change, the imminent eschatological and divine intervention concepts should be factored in and acknowledge the creator through prayer. Additionally, the eschatological theology echoed in the results. Solemn ethical objections to the engineering of machinery which emits gases poisonous to the environment and the destruction of flora were

raised. Strong environmental protection policies were recommended. Faith leaders should continue to create climate change awareness and in partnership with other stakeholders develop climate liturgy guides. These guides can be made accessible to congregates. Faith leaders should also develop adaptation programs in collaboration with environmentalist and the state. This study is limited because it relied on a low number of participants. Additionally, it only analyzed Christian perceptions. Further, comparative denominational studies, mixed methods studies, and policy case studies are recommended. Church leaders are presumably encouraging congregates to be environmentally friendly upholding their God given mandate to be custodians of the earth. Religion therefore unlocks a broad perspective of hope and obligation to protect the environment and reduce climate change.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed in this study.

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