

Christian perspectives on climate change. An eco-theological reading of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract: The exploitation of the natural environment has been linked by many scholars to cultural and religious worldviews. Lynn White Jr. attributes the origins of nature's abuse to medieval Western Christianity, arguing that the Biblical account of Creation is fundamentally anthropocentric and thereby facilitates the misuse of the natural world. Numerous scholars have sought to revisit Christian doctrine to demonstrate its compatibility with environmental concern. Furthermore, theologians across various Christian denominations have endeavoured to show that a proper, spiritual understanding of faith necessarily fosters a respectful attitude towards nature. The aim of this article is to further demonstrate that the Western mentality did not regard humanity as entitled to destroy nature for its own purposes, but rather recognised that human flourishing was closely linked to the nurturing of the environment. The starting point will be Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, in which human beings and nature are shown to thrive only in mutual harmony. A more complex relationship between humanity and the natural world is depicted in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, where nature becomes a mirror that reflects humanity's savage inclinations, which can only be restrained by Christian moral order. The destruction of nature, therefore, is not merely the result of an anthropocentric pursuit of technological knowledge; rather, it arises from an estrangement from Christian civilisation, which leads to the rejection of reason and of any civilising purpose.

Keywords: Christianity; eco-theology; children literature; *The Secret Garden*; *Lord of the Flies*.



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Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed growing concern within academic circles regarding the ecological crisis precipitated by the excessive exploitation of natural resources and the widespread discharge of toxic waste into water bodies and soil. While the immediate factor, such as industrial negligence and unsustainable forest management, were easily identifiable, scholars and commentators also explored deeper psychological, spiritual, and religious explanations for humanity's persistent abuse of nature and its resources.

On 26 December 1966, Lynn White Jr. delivered a now-famous lecture at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which he later published in *Science* under the title *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*. While his observations regarding the urgency of ecological issues and the influence of religious beliefs on human interactions with nature remain valuable, his claim that the Christian ethos is fundamentally responsible for human carelessness towards nature is open to debate. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Christian Western thought did not inherently promote the exploitation of nature for human ends; rather, it often emphasised the idea that societal wellbeing and prosperity were closely tied to the preservation and cultivation of the natural world.

White's article attracted considerable attention not only because he was a well-known medievalist, but especially because he located the origins of the ecological crisis in the Middle Ages. Even more unexpectedly, he explicitly blamed the Christian worldview for the modern environmental crisis, a denunciation unprecedented in its directness. In 2020, a volume titled *Fifty Years of Medieval Technology and Social Change*, edited by Steven A. Walton, was published to commemorate and critically assess Lynn White Jr.'s thesis. His critique is regarded as a turning point in the field, as he was the first to argue for "the necessity of considering the environmental crisis in a civilisational context that accounts for religion" (Hampton, "Introduction to The Cambridge Companion to Christianity and the Environment" 5).

In his view, two particularly salient observations emerge. First, that "modern technology and modern science are distinctively Occidental" in character (White 1204), in the sense that the Western tradition developed a particular interest in technology as a means of reducing human labour, an approach rooted in its cultural mentality. While drawing upon the knowledge of prominent Islamic, Greek, and Chinese scholars, the West applied these insights in practical ways to serve its economic interests, an orientation that, implicitly, had an impact on the surrounding natural world. Second, the West's leadership in both science and technology and, indirectly, in environmental degradation, can be traced back to the medieval period, much earlier than it used to be commonly acknowledged.

The corner stone of Lynn White Jr.'s argument is that "human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion" (White 1205), and this statement was not refuted by subsequent scholars, whether they agree or not with his accusations concerning Christianity. While contrasting the of pre-Christian, pagan

conceptions of time, which did not define a specific beginning for the world,¹ with the Christian view of time, White emphasizes the Judeo-Christian creation story, which portrays man, made in God's image, as superior to the natural world. Such a mentality was inherently anthropocentric and according to White it allowed man to have dominion over nature, and even more to abuse it, if he benefited from it.

Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions, not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. (White 1205)

Such a forceful critique prompted numerous responses in defense of Christianity. In *Sustainability: Economics, Ecology, and Justice* (1992), John B. Cobb emphatically stated that "Christianity was certainly not the cause of the environmental crisis" (Cobb 2).² However, White is not anti-Christian in his discourse, nor is he anti-Catholic, since he acknowledges the merit of saints such as Saint Francis of Assisi, who expressed deep reverence for animals and the natural world. Nevertheless, White calls for a reconsideration of religion in an attempt to find one that best aligns with Western mentality and ecological concern. His message is anti-establishment, and he emphasizes that Saint Francis's constructive attitude was considered "heretical." According to White, for Francis, "the ant is no longer simply a homily for the lazy, [...] now they are Brother Ant," (White 1206) an image so inspiring that Paul Santmire titled his work *Brother Earth: Nature, God and Ecology in Times of Crisis* (1970) and sought "a [Christian] religious vision which will teach us to say, in the depths of our being, 'brother earth'" (Santmire 6). Francis Schaeffer likewise tried to review possible religious mindsets, but he openly refuted White's arguments in support of animism³, arguing in *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970)⁴ that pantheism does not offer a correct answer to man – nature relationship, and insisting that the Bible supports care and consideration for God's creation. (25) The growing scholarly interest in articulating a nuanced Christian response

¹ "Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had a beginning" (White 1205). In Greek mythology, Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky) are recorded as the progenitors of the Titans and, later, the gods. Gaia, who gives birth to Uranus, herself originates from Chaos.

² He offers the reforming of Christian attitudes as a solution for the present crisis: "This would involve a renewal of the ideals of poverty and self-sacrifice far removed from the understanding of Christian life in the recent past but resembling more ancient and traditional Christian teaching" (Cobb 30).

³ White also doubts that Zen Buddhism could be a successful religious option in the West, considering its Asian cultural specificity.

⁴ He does not favour Eastern Christianity either, considering that only Protestant theology can provide an adequate system to support the preservation of nature.

to the increasingly evident ecological crisis is further illustrated by the recent publication of *The Cambridge Companion to Christianity and the Environment* (2022).

Eco-theology, a way of investigating literature

Eco-theology, as it emerged in the second half of twentieth century, is far from homogeneous, particularly when various Christian denominations are considered. Irrespective of several denominational differences, the general principle – that interest in how care for nature is connected to one’s religious beliefs – can be applied to literary criticism. *Ecotheology in the Humanities: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding the Divine*, edited by Melissa Brotton, is one such example. Following her practice of finding “the spiritual meanings of the physical world” (Brotton xvi), one can start analysing medieval literature, and the first relevant example is the popular medieval Bestiary. This complex product, which combined artistic depictions with theological information and allegorical stories is based on an Early Christian text, *Physiologus*, originating in the East⁵, which presents an array of real and imaginary animals, attributing to them allegorical significance or interpreting them as symbols of Christ or the Devil, and implicitly moral examples.

In the medieval worldview, the proper interpretation of nature thus depended upon the quality of a Christian’s relationship with the divine. The state of human sinfulness was projected onto the pitiful condition of the natural world, a perspective illustrated in the twelfth-century allegorical *De planctu Naturae* (*The Complaint (Complaint) of Nature*) by Alain of Lille. In this text, Nature is personified as a beautiful lady in distress, whose garments, painted with representations of animals, are damaged as a result of human sin. The work concludes with a chorus of virtues urging people to abandon their sinful ways, positioning *De planctu Naturae* as an ecological text⁶ *avant la lettre*. While theological and monastic writings often emphasised the symbolic and spiritual significance of the natural world, in practice, many felt entitled to exploit natural resources, for example, by felling trees to construct fortifications and settlements, or clearing woodland to create farmland.⁷

Another step in this approach is the analysis of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which emphasizes the contrast between the Christian, limited worldview exemplified by Gawain and the more expansive, unrestricted connection with the natural world embodied

⁵ This text exemplifies White’s observation that: “In the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men: the ant is a sermon to sluggards; rising flames are the symbol of the soul’s aspiration” (White 1206).

⁶ Literally, the destruction of the animals (depicted on Nature’s torn garments) reflects a disturbance caused by humanity’s alienation from what the author considers the natural order, not necessarily ecological devastation in the modern sense. The work is primarily a didactic moral treatise; however, it is particularly relevant to our study that it attributes the distress of the animal kingdom to human sin.

⁷ John Aberth mentions the fact that records show the repeated offence of simple farmers illegally clearing the forest to get more arable land, an offence overlooked both by the crown and by private landowners because this meant more monetary benefits from taxes. (94)

by the Green Knight. Here again, failure is presented as the result of sin, not of natural or physical human limitation. Articles such as “Gawain’s Struggle with Ecology: Attitudes toward the Natural World in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”,⁸ published in the *Journal of Ecocriticism*, focus on these aspects. *La Queste del Saint Graal* could be approached from a similar perspective, particularly in the episode of the Tree of Life, which changes colour in response to human actions: it turns green when Eve becomes pregnant and red when Abel kills his brother.

Arguably more than medieval Christianity, Protestant theology tolerated the neglect of the natural world.⁹ Some theologians have argued that the Protestant emphasis on an unmediated relationship between the individual and God effectively places nature outside the realm of human concern, rendering it irrelevant to humanity’s declared purpose in life, as it is neither necessary nor instrumental to salvation: “Rising above nature in order to enter into communion with God became a hallmark of Protestant thought” (Santmire 122).¹⁰ Furthermore, the strict discipline encouraged by Protestantism, promoting a focus on spiritual and material pursuits¹¹ while discouraging forms of entertainment, may have contributed to a diminished receptiveness to the enjoyment of nature. This attitude may be observed in eighteenth-century literature shaped by Enlightenment rationalism, which often emphasised the practical and instrumental use of nature. Conversely, Romanticism rejected this rigid, rationalist worldview and embraced a more imaginative and dreamlike engagement with reality, while generally maintaining a spiritual approach to nature,¹² as seen in the works of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the American Transcendentalists.

Christianity, whether in its Catholic or Protestant versions remains the most relevant mental framework in European (and North American) culture, despite numerous other spiritual influences and it is beyond any doubt that it has played a significant role in shaping ecological attitudes over the centuries. While literary eco-criticism is now well-established,¹³ and eco-theology studies are growing in number¹⁴, the application of eco-

⁸ “Foregrounding the relationships between these characters and their natural surroundings reveals a dual cultural approach to nature. Gawain represents the attitude that the environment is hostile and needs to be ruthlessly conquered. Bertilak represents an opposing approach: humans should be custodians of the environment, working with and respecting it” (George 31).

⁹ White may have misdescribed Christian theology in the sphere of Latin Christianity, his thesis is less obviously misguided when applied to the property-oriented individualism and capitalism of the Christianity of the period from the seventeenth century onwards. (Attfield 66)

¹⁰ The Protestant tradition also has its theological defenders, and Trees Van Montfoort’s insightful work *Green Theology: An Eco-Feminist and Ecumenical Perspective* (2022) reveals that Protestant theology can indeed express ecological concern within an ecumenical Christian framework. She notes that a central and foundational Protestant belief is that one of the ways humanity comes to know God is by understanding the world “like a book by which one can know of God’s power and divinity” (Van Montfoort 33).

¹¹ Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) supports this theory.

¹² Shelley, with his famous essay “The Necessity of Atheism” (1811), was, in fact, an exception.

¹³ While there are several ecocritical readings of *Lord of the Flies*, notably Rohitash Thapliyal’s *Ecocritical Reading of William Golding’s Lord of the Flies* and Kanshuai Jiang’s *An Analysis of*

theology to literary criticism is still in its early stages. In my analysis of two highly influential early twentieth-century novels I will explore the idea that the modern Western mindset did not view humanity as entitled to exploit nature for its own purposes, but rather supported the belief that people flourish when they nurture the environment.

Rituals in *A Secret Garden* (1911) and in the *Lord of the Flies* (1954)

The novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett offers valuable insight into the ways in which human development and the natural world are closely intertwined. It demonstrates that, for the modern ordinary Briton, caring for nature was seen as a means not only of fostering familial harmony, but also of restoring physical health. Burnett, who was British by birth and American by adoption, was not a religious person and generally avoided explicit references to faith in her works. Although she never visited India, two of her central characters: Sara Crewe, in *A Little Princess* (1905) and Mary Lennox, in *The Secret Garden* (1911), are depicted as having lived there before arriving in England, where they must adapt to a new cultural environment. In neither of these novels is Indian religion mentioned overtly. While Sara is portrayed as gentle and imaginative, drawing on magical tales from India¹⁵ to endure a harsh reality, Mary, on the other hand, has no fond memories of the subcontinent. For her, it is England that offers renewal, granting her vitality and purpose after her life in India had seemingly drained her of any desire to flourish.

One of the first points to consider is that, at first glance, one might expect a connection between the Indian spiritual worldview, characterised by a reverence for the natural world, and Mary's later interest in tending the garden, particularly given her prolonged contact with her ayah. However, no such link is suggested in the narrative. For Frances Hodgson Burnett, it is England that holds the healing, even magical, power to bring inner harmony. It is within the English countryside that the children are able to create and be re-created, that is, to undergo profound personal transformation, while working in the garden.

Perhaps the most suggestive element concerning Christian religion is the moment when Colin, convinced that he is not doomed to die, confessed "I feel as if I want to shout out something – something thankful, joyful!" It is the moment when the characters in the book declare openly their Christian identity, because the only way in which they agree to

Antinuclear Thought in William Golding's Literary Works from the Perspective of Eco-environmental Psychology, these studies do not engage with the Christian framework that is central to my analysis, and thus fall outside the scope of this article. Similarly, ecologically informed interpretations of *The Secret Garden*, such as Ratih Pelangi Putri's *Natural Healing in Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden* (2022) and Ignadhitya Herdiana's *Nature's Role Toward Mental and Physical Healing Reflected in The Secret Garden* (2018), while insightful, do not address the theological dimensions that inform the present discussion.

¹⁴ Besides the studies already mentioned I would like to mention Jarosław Babiński's *Eco-theology: A New Approach* (2024).

¹⁵ Sara Crewe's stories draw loosely on Indian mythological elements, but they are not explicitly religious and only marginally influenced by Hinduism.

show their happiness is to “sing th' Doxology”

‘Dickon can sing it for thee, I'll warrant’, replied Ben Weatherstaff.

Dickon answered with his animal charmer's smile.

‘They sing it i' church’, he said. “Mother says she believes th' skylarks sings it when they gets up i' th' morning’. (Burnett 236)

Actually, the fact that, according to Dickon's mother, birds share the doxology with the people is a very Franciscan detail. Thus, Christian rituals merged with the mysterious unidentified Magic of the garden and gave it a recognisable name and voice, Christian grace. It is perhaps the moment which best shows how children discover the Christian religion and apply it to their needs. “‘Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic.’ He stopped and thought in a puzzled way. ‘Perhaps they are both the same thing. How can we know the exact names of everything?’” (Burnett 236).

Colin's earlier pagan-like chant is treated as a kind of scientific experiment: “I am going to make the scientific experiment [...] Every morning and evening and as often in the daytime as I can remember I am going to say, 'Magic is in me! Magic is making me well'” (Burnett 208). This established ritual is readily embraced not only by Colin, but also by Mary, and even by Ben Weatherstaff, who had initially expressed scepticism. But he is ultimately moved by the sincerity and emotional intensity of the children's words. This simple, personal form of invocation, neither framed as prayer, nor grounded in formal religious practice, is eventually replaced by a more traditional mode of prayer: the Doxology.

A pagan-like chant appears in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) as well: “Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!” (135-36), though, in this case, it is part of an invented ritual, with destructive and criminal consequences. The entire novel may be read as a depiction of the children's regression from civilised, playful individuals to a murderous group, driven by the desire to kill, with some members reluctantly embracing violence in order to avoid being killed. A crucial element in this analysis is that the paradisiacal nature is never portrayed as antagonistic; there is no treacherous feature of the island which brings about their fear of a beast and no harmful natural event that compels their descent into savagery. Rather, once any restriction is lifted, some of the children behave violently, taking pleasure in killing and increasingly embracing this war-like behaviour as the story unfolds.

This change moves in a direction quite opposite to that depicted in Burnett's narrative. In the *Lord of the Flies*, societal conventions, which are inherently Christian, are abandoned, whereas in *The Secret Garden*, they are gradually restored. In both novels, children are left to their own devices; however, in *The Secret Garden*, the quiet and discreet presence of society is conveyed through benevolent figures such as the gardener and Dickon's mother, and is experienced as a subtle celebration of Christian values. In *Lord of the Flies*, Jack, the former “chapter chorister and head boy”, is not the voice of reason or the representative of Christianity, but quite the opposite, he is the religious

corruptor, rejecting Christianity.

In fact, the degradation of the children's behaviour is the consequence of the absence of genuine spiritual guidance, and any memory of their Christian upbringing appears to have been forgotten or suppressed. Moreover, Simon cannot be regarded as a Christ-like figure, as he fails to reveal the truth about the identity of the Beast, which is merely a dead pilot. His surreal encounter with the Lord of the Flies serves as a form of preparation for his role as a human sacrifice on the altar of a newly invented religion that is distinctly un-Christian in nature. Both Roger, who is Piggy's cold-blooded killer and Jack must have been familiar, as Dickon was, with the doxology and the Christian teachings, since they sang in the choir, yet they chose to disregard them. The destruction of nature, both in *Lord of the Flies* and in modern society, stems not simply from an anthropocentric reliance on science and technology, but also from an alienation from Christian empathy and civilisation, which leads to the ruthless pursuit of power through violence and war.

It is evident that the isolated children in both novels experience a need for ritual. In *The Secret Garden*, the initial magical chant, which begins as a playful experiment, is eventually replaced by the established "Doxology". As a result, the children's rebellion and opposition to authority, evident in their attempts to deceive and hide from the household servants, is transformed into an expression of gratitude for Colin's recovery and the restoration of the garden. In *The Lord of the Flies*, by contrast, the violent chant induces a trance-like state that culminates in human sacrifice. Whereas, Jack's obsession with hunting silences any recollection of his earlier, more civilised existence, and transforms the paradisiacal island into a fiery vision of hell, Mary, Colin, and Dickon revive a dormant garden and turn it into a symbolic Garden of Eden.

The relationship with animals. Jack versus Dickon

Upon her arrival in the English countryside in *The Secret Garden*, Mary is initially unhappy. However, after discovering the garden, her feelings transform, and her happiness stems both from the companionship of Dickon and her cousin and from the secret garden itself, whose very secrecy significantly enhances her pleasure in tending to it. Over time, Mary evolves from a state of solitude to one of friendship, whereas in *Lord of the Flies* Simon and the other boys, originally charmed by the island, regress from companionship towards isolation and hostility.¹⁶ Simon, too, has an isolated "secret" clearing, a place where he is alone and finds solace in the tranquillity of the environment. This tranquillity fosters a sense of closeness, if not union, with nature and enables him to ascend to a heightened level of awareness. As Golding writes, "Nothing moved but a pair of gaudy butterflies that danced round each other in the hot air. Holding his breath, he

¹⁶ Unfortunately, he is the only one who feels comfortable and relaxed in this environment and even volunteers to walk alone in the forest. He is, nevertheless, aware of the others' limitations and empathetically describes the *little 'uns'* changed reaction to the island as "As if it wasn't a good island." Neither Ralph nor Jack attempts to contradict him (Golding 43–4); for them, too, it is no longer a good island.

cocked a critical ear at the sounds of the island” (47).

There is, however, one area in which Simon does not appear to excel, and that is his relationship with animals. In contrast, Jack, in a moment of “madness” (Golding 42), confesses, “I know how they feel” (44), referring to the pigs he hunts. In the unfamiliar environment of the forest, he experiences a disturbing sense of connection with the animals he pursues, as he too becomes attuned to the oppressive and threatening atmosphere: “you can feel as if you are not hunting, but – being hunted” (43). This may serve as a definition of Jack’s relationship with animals, namely one shaped by fear, domination, and the compulsion to kill. Jack perceives a distorted rhythm within the island’s natural world, and he derives satisfaction from sensing the fear and pain of the animals. While he may not be the most inherently malevolent character, Roger, the reticent and uncommunicative figure, commits the first intentional murder with the killing of Piggy. Jack possesses the charisma and authority to influence others. It is through this influence, and the way he channels it, that Jack emerges as the true embodiment of evil on the island.

In stark contrast stands Dickon, who is perpetually surrounded by animals that exhibit a profound trust in him. He appears as a near-mythical figure, a natural tamer endowed with an almost supernatural ability to communicate with animals in a manner reminiscent of the classical figure Pan. This rare talent garners admiration from all who encounter him. Dickon’s affinity with nature extends beyond his care for birds, squirrels, and his fox, as he is also an accomplished gardener. His knowledge of horticulture does not derive from scholarly study, but rather from an intuitive understanding of what plants require in order to thrive. When the children attempt to articulate the enigmatic nature of his character, they liken him to an “angel,” thereby invoking a Christian symbolic framework again. This angelic association is reinforced by his self-effacing presence in the narrative: he does not assume the central role, which is instead alternately occupied by the two cousins. Nevertheless, from an eco-theological perspective, Dickon serves as both catalyst and sustaining force in the novel, enabling the re-establishment of familial harmony, the rejuvenation of the garden’s natural vitality, and the physical healing of both children.

Conversely, Jack embodies the inverse of this image, almost a photographic negative of Dickon, both in character and effect. The killing of the sow, which was also a mother, is a particularly brutal deed that desecrates Simon’s clearing, which had functioned as a kind of sanctuary, and becomes a grim portent of Simon’s fate. Once dead, the animal is stripped of its identity and transformed into the pagan Lord of the Flies. The severed head, serving as a sacrificial offering to the imagined “beast”, symbolises both an acknowledgment of its dominion and the inauguration of a new and brutal order on the island. This moment marks the collapse of any remaining hope for harmonious coexistence among the group’s factions and signals the onset of inevitable catastrophe.

When comparing the two characters who interact directly with animals, a clear difference emerges. On the one hand, protecting animals is associated with the perception of an “angel,” as the act of safeguarding them is Dickon’s most prominent characteristic.

Alternatively, the absence of Christian principles, and indeed any recollection of the cultural Christianity they were taught, results in a lack of moral direction. For Jack, the killing of animals is not seen as a final degradation, but rather as a step towards the killing of humans, culminating in the complete loss of humanity. Initially, hunting is justified by the need to obtain the pig's meat, yet it gradually transforms into mesmeric trance, a form of heartless entertainment and, finally, murder. Moreover, the total destruction of the island, which is deliberately set ablaze, is framed as part of a hunting ritual: the pursuit of Ralph. All the remaining children partake in this self-destructive activity, highlighting their collective descent into chaos.

While Frances Burnett's work is not explicitly Christian, it is undoubtedly shaped by a Western Christian worldview, and various details establish a Christian framework for the otherwise magical narrative of spiritual rebirth and the restoration of health. By contrast, William Golding's novel depicts a society entirely devoid of Christian teachings, a condition that ultimately brings about a complete ecological collapse. Once these teachings, which are both cultural and moral, are forgotten and the children regress into a form of paganism, the urge to dominate nature becomes more powerful than any inclination to live in harmony with it. Simon, who symbolises a genuine connection with the island and holds the truth about the so-called "beast", is murdered, and his death prompts the emergence of a brutal regime governed by violence and fear. In this light, both novels may be read as a counter argument to Lynn White's theory that Christianity was responsible for the exploitation of nature in Western Europe, or that pagan religions were more attuned to nature. From an eco-theological perspective, both texts suggest that a loving and nurturing relationship with the natural world is not only compatible with Christian belief, but is actively supported by it.

Conclusion

Despite being written more than fifty years ago, Lynn White's arguments have retained their relevance and continue to provoke significant discussion. His proposal to reconsider or reshape Christianity with an ecological emphasis contributed to the development of an entire theological field: eco-theology. The new field of eco-theology has drawn contributions from across the spectrum of Christian denominations, offering diverse perspectives that affirm the compatibility of Christian belief with the protection and care of the natural world.

In both *The Secret Garden* and *Lord of the Flies*, humanity, in its most nascent form, represented by children, interacts with nature. This article emphasises two key aspects: first, that humans feel an inherent need for ritual in order to connect with their environment; and second, that people's relationships with animals reflect to some extent, the degree of harmony, or lack thereof, within human society. These novels demonstrate that human beings can learn to cherish nature when guided by Christian principles, but may become cruel and utterly destructive when they disregard their Christian traditions.

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