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**Research Paper Title:**  
Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands:  
A Review of Faith-Engaged Approaches and  
Opportunities

2nd Symposium on Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Region,  
Lautoka, Fiji, 21-23 August 2019



# **Abstract:** Intended research contribution

- The Pacific Island region is highlighted in the literature as one of the **most vulnerable geographic areas in the world**, with a high priority for adaptation to climate change.
- Relatedly, many interventions have been proposed and implemented over the years that approach environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change in the Pacific from a predominantly **scientific and technocratic worldview perspective**, in which climate change is seen as a science-informed issue, rather than a faith-informed issue.

# **Abstract:** Intended research contribution

- Adaptation initiatives are typically **scientifically justified and externally conceived, funded and implemented**. Regrettably, “[m]ost interventions intended to reduce exposure to environmental risk and to enable effective and sustainable adaptation to climate change in the Pacific Islands region have **failed to acknowledge influences on decisionmaking of spirituality and connectedness to Nature.**” (Nunn et al. 2016, p. 1)
- This is because in the Pacific region “decisionmakers are likely to be **influenced more by tradition and local precedent than science**” (p. 2)

# **Abstract:** Intended research contribution

- Given the “**almost total Christianization of Pacific Islands within the past century**” (ibid), where Census figures from both Fiji (2007) and Tonga (2011) suggest that a mere “<1% of the population stated they had no religion” (ibid, p. 6), it is pertinent and promising to explore opportunities for **faith-engaged approaches in respect of adaptation to environmental change**.
- This paper extends previous research by means of a systematic review of pertinent **challenges and arising opportunities**. Experiences and lessons synthesised in this paper will be useful for both policy and practice serving the cause of climate change adaptation in Pacific island communities. A **better understanding of the science-spirituality nexus in the Pacific will also enable better adaptation responses**.

- Nelson, W., & Luetz, J.M. (2019). **What Can We Learn from Pope Francis About Change Management for Environmental Sustainability? A Case Study on Success Factors for Leading Change in Change-Resistant Institutional Environments.** In W. Leal Filho, & A. Consorte McCrea (Eds.), *Sustainability and the Humanities* (pp. 503-524). Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Similar previous literary analysis

- [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95336-6\\_29](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95336-6_29)

**What Can We Learn from Pope Francis About Change Management for Environmental Sustainability? A Case Study on Success Factors for Leading Change in Change-Resistant Institutional Environments**



Wendy Nelson and Johannes M. Luetz

**Abstract** Leading and sustaining change efforts is widely recognised as an important success factor for achieving progress on matters pertaining to environmental sustainability. There are several reasons for this. For example, transitioning from a fossil fuel based global economy to one that is based on renewable energy is a challenge that is widely understood to remain difficult to achieve for humanity in the absence of influential and robust change management, sustained over time and space. Hence, there is a need for strategic leadership that can drive and sustain far-reaching societal behaviour change. While political duty bearers and senior corporate executives are typically identified as those stakeholders who are best positioned to lead change efforts towards increased environmental sustainability, there is a paucity of case studies that explore the role of ‘spiritual leaders’ in this important area, which sits at the intersection of business and environmental management, and social science investigation. This case study on Pope Francis addresses this knowledge gap. As the current head of the Roman Catholic Church, a global organisation which has been identified as being among some of the most influential and at the same time change-resistant organisations in the world, Pope Francis exemplifies the pivotal role, which spiritual leadership can play in progressing the global environmental sustainability agenda. By conducting a broad review of the literature, including popular, ecclesiological, managerial, and peer-reviewed scientific publications, this case study contributes to this important discourse. Noting important connections between

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(Nunn et al. 2016, p. 15)

- **“High levels of spirituality and connectedness to Nature explain the impotence of secular messaging while the high degree of concern about climate change identifies opportunities for intervention.”**

(Nunn et al. 2016, p. 15)

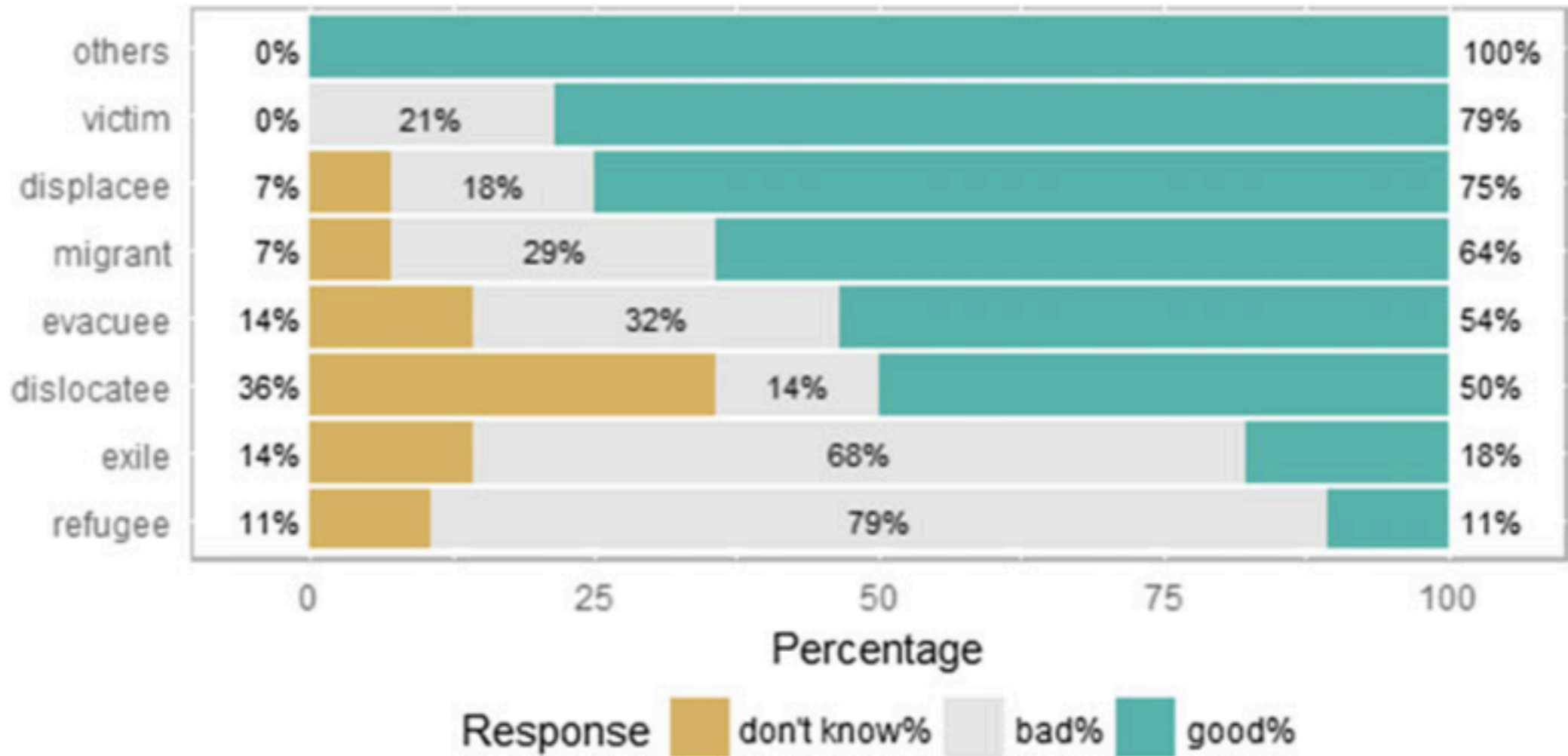
- “A major barrier identified to effective sustainable adaptation to climate change in the Pacific Islands region is the **‘lack of ownership’** that Pacific Island nations have of the climate-change issue, given that almost all adaptation initiatives have been **funded by external (donor) money** and have been applied using **English (rather than preferred vernaculars)** and in **unfamiliar cultural contexts.**” (Nunn 2009, 2013)

Luetz, J.M., & Havea, P.H. (2018). **“We’re not Refugees, We’ll Stay Here Until We Die!”**—Climate Change Adaptation and Migration Experiences Gathered from the Tulun and Nissan Atolls of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70703-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70703-7_1)



pilot study - context is important





**Fig. 10** Preferred nomenclature: characterisations and emotional responses

(Luetz & Havea 2018, p. 14)

# Local, contextualised vernacular

## **Respondents seemingly resist the label “refugees” - prefer local terminology**

- Respondents overwhelmingly rejected the representations “refugees” (79%) and “exiles” (68%) to refer to migration from atolls off the coast of Bougainville, and instead preferred local terms (100%) that were suggested during the semi-structured interviewing process.

## **The following local Tok Pisin terms were offered as counter-proposals:**

- (1) *tripman* (male)/*tripmeri* (female) “someone who wanders from place to place” (Verhaar 1990, p. 355). The term conveys “flexibility” and is “not a sealed identity”, being reminiscent of a “passenger”, “drifter”, “traveller” (P4). If people return home, they “would no longer be called *tripman* or *tripmeri*” (ibid.).

# Local, contextualised vernacular

- (2) ***Turangu*** “victim, something happened to you, you need help.” (P18). It “conveys empathy. Popular term in PNG, meaning, ‘I am sorry for what happened to you.’ ... People like being a ‘Turangu’, but wouldn’t want to stay one.” (P23). “Oh, poor one!—Covers almost every individual person or place, all ‘*manmeri*’. Sweeping word that ... strikes people’s hearts in Pidgin language, used throughout PNG. For example: ‘your friend, John, died yesterday.’ Response: ‘*oh, poor one, Turangu!*’” (P25).
- (3) ***Mekim wokabout*** “contextualised term that is easier to understand in Pidgin than ‘migrant’” (P26).
- Some respondents also suggested temporal fluidity and flexibility as important requirements: “there is no one-size-fits-all name ... You cannot give a single permanent term to a person. Time and situation influence the usage” (P1).

# **Question:** A case for contextualised worldview?

- **More than words, more than semantics**
- Religion provides “‘thick’ accounts of moral reasoning” (Hulme 2014, p. xii)
- **“motivational force not mirrored by economics or science” (Fair 2018, p. 4)**
- “... rather than as a barrier, religion can be embraced as a ‘cultural resource’” (ibid, Hulme 2017, p. 15)

## **Question:** Tapping into ‘thicker’ motivations?

- **“This need for ‘thick’ moral accounts rather than thin evocations of global values seems particularly pressing in the Pacific.” (Fair 2018, p. 4)**
- “many extant social science accounts instead present religion merely as a barrier to effective climate change responses in Oceania.” (ibid)
- **“the most influential messages are those that engage with people’s spiritual beliefs” (Nunn 2017)**

- Luetz, J.M., Buxton, G., & Bangert, K. (2018). **Christian Theological, Hermeneutical and Eschatological Perspectives on Environmental Sustainability and Creation Care—The Role of Holistic Education.** In J.M. Luetz, T. Dowden, & B. Norsworthy (Eds.), *Reimagining Christian Education—Cultivating Transformative Approaches* (pp. 51-73). Singapore: Springer Nature.

Previous scholarship on sustainability and evangelicalism

- [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0851-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0851-2_4)

Chapter 4  
**Christian Theological, Hermeneutical  
 and Eschatological Perspectives  
 on Environmental Sustainability  
 and Creation Care—The Role  
 of Holistic Education**



Johannes M. Luetz, Graham Buxton and Kurt Bangert

**Abstract** Education for environmental sustainability is increasingly highlighted as an important success factor for environmentally conscious and conscientious living, including the advancement of global poverty reduction and the attainment of developmental goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, education can be comprehended as a deeply ‘Christian’ endeavour, seeing that true Christian ‘religion’ seeks to improve the plight of the poor and needy (James 1:27), both physically and spiritually. The literature identifies some initiatives, where sustainability has been embedded within curricula in ways that have integrated the fundamentals of environmental science, spirituality and ethics. Even so, there is a paucity of initiatives that link the aforementioned foci with Christian theological, hermeneutical and eschatological perspectives. This theoretical chapter extends previous scholarship by means of a two-pronged approach, which links scientific and scriptural discursive reflections with arising opportunities for spiritually-shaped environmental sustainability. It does so with the intention of generating support for a more holistic Christian education agenda where scripturally shaped education for environmental sustainability and creation care does not remain side-lined as a fringe concern.

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 J. M. Luetz et al. (eds.), *Reimagining Christian Education*,  
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“The earth is the  
Lord’s, and  
everything in it,  
the world, and all  
who live in it.”  
(Psalm 24:1;  
Holy Bible)



# Creation care? Epistemological imperative

- **“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” (Rom. 1:20)**
- “if God can be ‘known’ through what He has made (Rom 1:20), then ‘creation care’ is raised as an epistemological priority of the highest order. Following this argument, epistemologically speaking, God becomes progressively less ‘knowable’ from what He has created as the defacing of His creation continues. Or inversely, the knowledge of God can be preserved through the conservation of His creation.” (Luetz et al. 2018, pp. 68-69)



# Epistemological considerations: “Different Knowledges”

- **“belittlement of religious thought** seems to mirror wider sentiments in the literature.” (Fair 2018, p. 5)
- “This rejection of religious perspectives appears to emerge from both a misunderstanding (and secular rejection) of religious thought and a desire to **enforce the boundaries between the religious and the scientific.**” (ibid)
- Social scientists typically treat attempts to bring religious understanding to climate science as “an illicit melange of elements best left separate” (Kempf 2017, p. 23)
- **Climate science “treated as unquestionably epistemologically superior” to religious narratives (Fair 2018, p. 6)**

# Epistemological considerations: “Different Knowledges”

**“I propose to hold various knowledges (Christian, *kastom* and scientific) in balance, exploring their convergences, connections and tensions, using an approach I term *tufala save*, a phrase that ... literally translates from Bislama as ‘**double knowledge.**’” (Fair 2018, p. 7)**

“Oh well that's like kind of climate change, ‘cause you know the rainbow came out, that's a promise, but and then scientists say it's ‘cause of the water or something ... creating a spectrum. It's good to have two beliefs. Both of them are right. (Ruth, youth climate advocate)” (Fair 2018, p. 7)

**“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” (Albert Einstein)**

# Noah in Genesis 6-9 - Three readings

- **Reading 1:** The rainbow covenant and climate denial?
- **Reading 2:** Noah as an icon of preparation?
- **Reading 3:** Pacific Islanders as those outside of the ark?

(Hannah Fair 2018, pp. 8-12)

# Three eschatological models

- (1) Rainbow Model
- (2) Apocalypse Model
- (3) Nineveh Model

(Luetz et al. 2018)

# (1) Rainbow Model

- “Never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” (Gen. 8:21-22)

## (2) Apocalypse Model

- “For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Mt 24:38-39)

## (2) Apocalypse Model

- “expressed in Hiroshima atomic bombs, the energy trapped by man-made global warming pollution is now **‘equivalent to exploding 400,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs per day 365 days per year’** (Hansen 2012; cf. Braasch 2013; Cook 2013).”
- “Clearly, visualising yearly cumulative global warming energy as exploding **146 million Hiroshima atomic bombs annually** makes it quite clear that anthropogenic climate change is likely to have severe long-term consequences that may well have some rather ‘apocalyptic’ end results.” (cited in Luetz et al. 2018, p. 64)

## (3) Nineveh Model

- “The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth and sat down in the dust” (v. 5) Even the king of the city “took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust” (v. 6)
- “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them; and he did it not” (v. 10)



# Concluding Synthesis

- “None of these narratives are the *right* one: none should be treated as an exclusive vehicle for future climate communication. But the diversity of courses of action they demonstrate suggests the richness and heterogeneity of religious responses to climate change and the potential for fruitful connections between religious and scientific knowledges. **They demonstrate the potential for more-than-scientific yet not anti-scientific responses to climate change, which are locally meaningful and morally compelling.**” (Fair 2018, p. 11)

# ENVISAGED BOOK PROJECT

# **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

## **OVERVIEW**

- **Editors:** Johannes Luetz [jluetz@chc.edu.au](mailto:jluetz@chc.edu.au) and Patrick Nunn [pnunn@usc.edu.au](mailto:pnunn@usc.edu.au)
- **Academic Publisher:** Springer Nature (TBC)
- **Volume:** Approx. 20-30 chapters (300-350 pages)
- **Scope:** Peer-reviewed edited book that addresses a critical gap in the literature

# **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

## **BACKGROUND**

As the region in the world perhaps most exposed to climate change, the Pacific Islands face uncertain futures and are in need of adaptation solutions that are both effective and sustainable. Yet because adaptation interventions have been mostly externally designed, funded and implemented, they have uncritically privileged a scientific and technocratic worldview that contrasts sharply with that of most Pacific Island people. Most interventions intended to reduce exposure to environmental risk and to enable effective and sustainable adaptation to climate change in the Pacific Islands region have failed to acknowledge influences on decisionmaking of spirituality and connectedness to Nature. In the light of the almost total Christianization of Pacific Islands within the past century, such intervention failures are surprising. The situation cannot continue because every day the need for adaptation to climate change that is effective and sustainable is growing. Given that in the Pacific Islands region decisionmakers are likely to be influenced more by tradition and local precedent than by science, this book makes the purposive exploration of opportunities for faith-engaged approaches to climate change adaptation a fertile and promising undertaking.

**Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

## Call for Papers

It is against this background that suitably qualified experts and project teams are invited to contribute to the edited volume “**Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches**”. Experiences, perspectives and lessons gathered in the book will be invaluable for both policy and practice serving the cause of climate change adaptation in Pacific Island communities. A better understanding of the science-spirituality nexus in the Pacific will also enable more sustainable and locally meaningful adaptation responses.

# **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

## **CONTRIBUTION**

- In addition to featuring the findings of case studies, literary analyses, field projects and empirical research, the volume will contain a wide range of perspectives exemplifying the diversity of faith-engaged approaches across the Pacific Island region.
- A unique feature of this interdisciplinary peer reviewed book is its strong practice-oriented focus that promotes “more-than-scientific yet not anti-scientific responses to climate change that are locally meaningful and morally compelling” (Hannah Fair, 2018).
- Comprising peer reviewed works by scholars, professionals and practitioners from across Oceania, the book addresses a critical gap in the literature and represents a ground-breaking interdisciplinary contribution to climate change adaptation in the Pacific Island region intended to underwrite its people’s effective and sustained adaptation to climate change, thereby minimizing its impacts on their lives.

# **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

## **ENVISAGED CHAPTER TOPICS**

Topics include (but are not limited to) the following cross-cutting themes and examples:

### **1. Context: Past, present and future perspectives**

- Opening chapter: Empiricism, environment and belief
- Environment and belief in the Pacific Islands (the history of 'Pacific people's linkage of environment and deity' with examples, e.g., disasters and divine attribution, etc.)
- Faith-based rationalisations of past climate change
- Faith-based opportunities for future climate change adaptation

## **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

### **2. Theory: Concepts, narratives and theoretical frameworks**

- Exploratory discourses: the case for faith-engaged approaches in the Pacific
- Ecotheology, ‘creation care’ and ecological hermeneutics
- Epistemological and eschatological perspectives
- Integrated discourses: bridging the science-spirituality divide — or is this “an illicit melange of elements best left separate”? (Wolfgang Kempf, 2017)
- Creating consilience: conjoining contributions from the sciences and humanities
- Enlisting religious convictions in the service of climate change adaptation as a “motivational force not mirrored by economics or science” (Hannah Fair, 2018)



## **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

### **3. Practice: Empirical research and praxis-informed case examples**

- Leveraging spiritual leadership for policy development and regulatory change
- Quantitative and qualitative research, reviews and analyses
- Climate change and worldview persuasion: Theories, practices and realities
- Imagining barriers: how positionality affects insider-outsider adaptation discourse
- Case studies and grassroots examples of innovative faith-engaged adaptation practice

## **Edited Book:** Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches (Luetz & Nunn 2020)

### **4. Doctrine: Scriptural contributions and perspectives**

- Holy books: opportunities and challenges for effecting adaptation
- Scripture and climate change adaptation praxis: Gold mine or mine field?
- Scriptural reflections on longing and belonging, home and homelessness, human migration, displacement and resettlement
- Scriptural narratives and representations: Noah as an icon of pre-disaster preparedness
- Theological and hermeneutical perspectives on “end time prophecy” and Biblical eschatology

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### **5. Engagement: Engaging stakeholders and constituencies**

- Professors, pastors or politicians ... different epistemologies for different constituencies?
- The role of the Pacific Conference of Churches
- Mormonism in the Pacific Islands
- Engaging religious stakeholders: Inter-denominationalism, ecumenicalism, church alliances, parachurch organisations, multi-faith coalitions
- Indigenous perspectives on place, culture, language, worldview and identity

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**6. Reflections:**

- Limits to faith-engaged approaches

Other contributions would be welcome.

Please consult the editors if you have additional ideas.

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## **EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

Expressions of interest to contribute to the book, initially consisting of a 200-word abstract, with the title of the work, qualifications and the full contact details of the authors, should be sent to Dr. Johannes Luetz [jluetz@chc.edu.au](mailto:jluetz@chc.edu.au). Details on the online submission and the peer-review process will be shared with those authors whose abstracts are accepted. The deadline for the submissions of abstracts is **30 November 2019**. Full papers are due by **31 March 2020**. The book is expected to be launched in **mid-2020**.

# Thank you!



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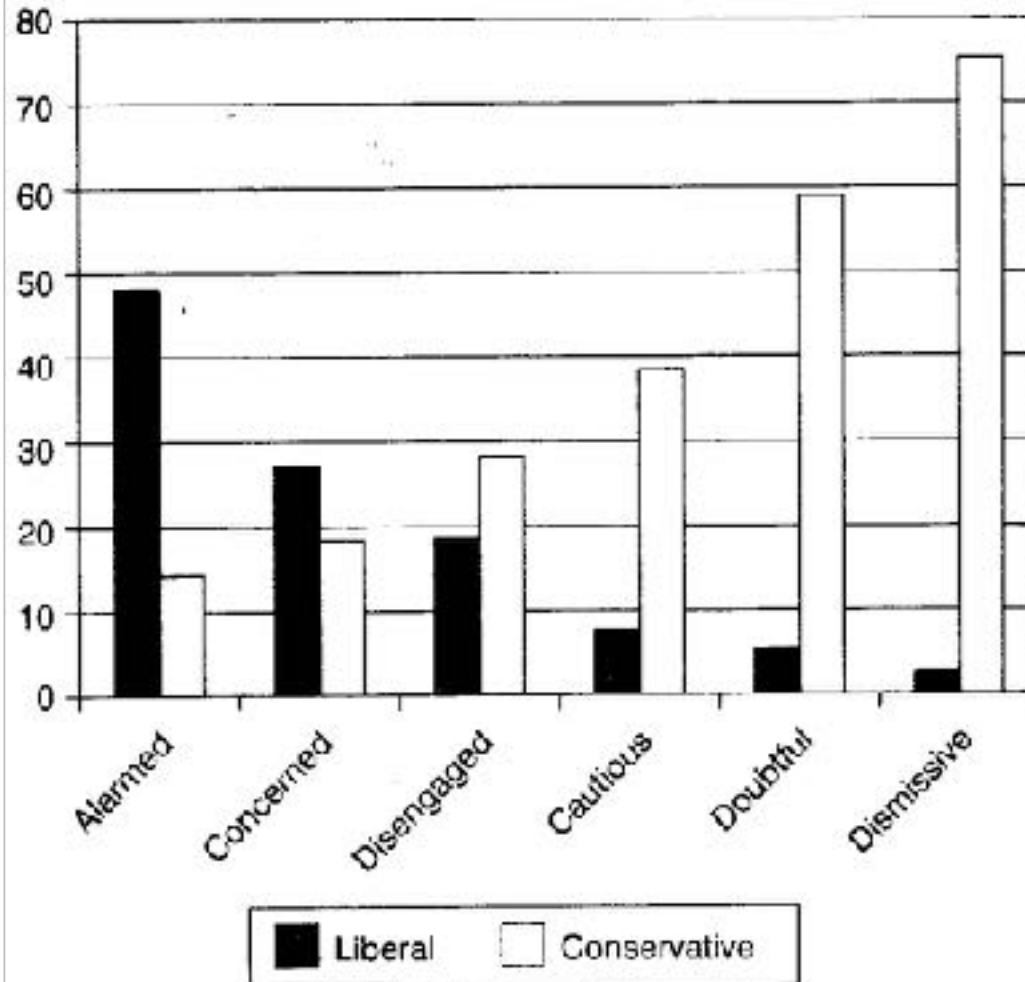
BACKUP SLIDES

# BACKUP

- **“Reformation emphasis on *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) has desensitized us to God’s other book, one that has spoken truthfully for millennia ... [Although the] Christian community has long held that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are ‘inspired’ (*theopneustos*, 2 Tim. 3:16) by God and the basis for faithful reflection in the church ... Christian writers have maintained that Creation can be read as a text about God and that God has presented us with ‘**two books**’ – **Scripture *and* the natural world.**”** (Brunner et al. 2014, p. 23)



Shares of liberals and conservatives in each global warming group (%)



Source: Based on Table 20 in Edward Maibach, Connie Roser-Renouf and Anthony Leiserowitz. *Global Warnings 'Six Americas' 2009*

Note: 'Moderates' are not shown

- Clive Hamilton (2010):  
Requiem for a species: Why we resist the truth about climate change p. 110



## **Opportunities for future research:**

How might worldview impact on climate change adaptation in other sociocultural contexts?

Maldives

Islam: 99%

Others: 1%

# Republic of Maldives: **Geospatial Issues & Demographic Issues**

- **Two long chains of 26 atolls** southwest of India and Sri Lanka
- **1,190 coral islands** scattered over 850 km of ocean (Godfrey, 2007)
- **99.9%** of nation's territory (90,000 sq km) is **water**
- **Population density:** 1,053 people per sq km (World Bank, 2011)
- **193 inhabited islands + 88 resort islands** (MPND, 2006)
- The vast majority of islands are **uninhabited**

**Maldives: Population 320,081 (World Bank, 2011)**

**Malé: Population 103,693 (MPND 2006, p. 8)**

**(80% of land less than 1 metre above sea level)**

**Malé: 1.77 sq km**

cf. Luetz, J.M. (2017). Climate Change and Migration in the Maldives: Some Lessons for Policy Makers. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), Climate Change Adaptation in Pacific Countries (pp. 35-69). Cham: Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50094-2\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50094-2_3)



**Maldives: among most densely settled nations in the world (World Bank, 2011)**

“The population density of Malé ... among the highest in the world” (MPND 2006, p. 41);

“the densest city in the world” (MHUD 2008, p. 14)