

Religion, theology and constructions of earth and gender: An editorial

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In the evolving landscape of theological and religious scholarship, the intersectionality of gender, environment and faith has emerged as a critical focal point. This special issue curated and subedited by Sophia Chirongoma and Linda Naicker lends credence to the depth and diversity of this field. This collection of articles presents an array of insights, analysis and reflections, offering readers a profound exploration of how religion, theology and gender intersect with environmental concerns. The bulk of the articles in this collection emerged from a collaborative Circle of Concerned African Women Theologian's Conference in collaboration with the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR) and the Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women, Religion and Pandemics, which took place on the 24th–26th July 2022. The subeditors would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of page fees for some of the articles in this collection by the Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women and Pandemics, based at the University of Zimbabwe. It is funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany. The Research Institute for Theology and Religion, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women and Pandemics are prestigious institutions and initiatives in Africa and play instrumental roles in fostering academic scholarship and activism with particular focus on the African context. This collaborative initiative has yielded a rich tapestry of research that engages with pressing social justice issues, issues of equality and equity, and the interplay between gender, faith and the environment.

The Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women, Religion and Pandemics was established at the University of Zimbabwe in 2021. This initiative, focused on raising awareness of women's contributions to pandemic responses, critically evaluates the past experiences of African religious women and their potential for shaping future responses. By seeking partnerships and collaborations with like-minded research institutions and scholars, the Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women, Religion and Pandemics amplifies the collective voice of African religious women in the face of emergencies such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Ebola. It has emerged as a crucial platform for examining the role of African religious women in confronting pandemics.

The collaborative efforts of these three pillars of theological and religious scholarship have given birth to this special issue, which delves into a myriad of themes and perspectives. This special issue on 'Religion, Theology and Constructions of Earth and Gender' contributes significantly to the fields of gender, ecology, religion and theology. This special issue coalized a diverse range of perspectives and insights that shed light on the complex intersections of gender, environment and faith. The collaboration between the RITR, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the Humboldt Research Hub in Africa on Women, Religion and Pandemics has yielded a rich array of cutting-edge research. Throughout this special collection, a deep exploration of the challenges and opportunities that arise at the nexus of religion, theology, gender and environment, is evident. This collection serves as a powerful reminder of the pivotal role that theology, religion and gender studies play in addressing some of the most pertinent challenges of our time. It calls upon scholars, activists and policymakers to continue this important work and strive for a more just and equitable world where the dignity of all, both human and Mother Earth, is prioritized, upheld and protected.

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