



ENVIRONMENT

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN: Cultivating a Contemporary Theology of Creation by David Vincent Meconi, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. 332 pages, index. Paperback; \$35.00. ISBN: 9780802873507.

This book is a part of the Catholic Theological Formation Series sponsored by the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity, the graduate school at the University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, MN. As stated in the preface, the focus of this series is to prepare priests, teachers, and leaders within the Roman Catholic tradition. While the series is designed to be academic in its tenor, it also aims to promote a form of discourse that is “not only professional in its conduct but spiritual in its outcomes.” Theological formation is to be more than an academic exercise as it is also about the development of a spiritual capacity to discern what is true and good. This series, then, aims to develop the habits of the mind required of a sound intellect and the spiritual aptitude for the truth of God’s living Word and God’s church.

In the summer of 2014, a group of scholars gathered at the Saint Paul Seminary in Minnesota to examine what the Christian tradition might have to say about caring for creation. The fifteen essays that are included in *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* are the product of these discussions. Collectively, they defend environmental responsibility and provide the basis for the development of an ecological spirituality. Although the essays preceded the 2015 release of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’s encyclical on the environment, they closely parallel the major concerns, themes, and figures put forth by the Holy Father. They agree that any proper theology of creation must resist sacralizing nonhuman creatures. At the same time, they refuse to reduce creatures to merely natural objects to be exploited only for human gain.

Rather than reviewing all of the fifteen essays that are included in the book, I will briefly summarize four of them as representative examples. The fourth essay in the collection was written by Marie George, a professor at St. John’s University in New York who has received several awards from the John Templeton Foundation for her work in science and religion. Her essay, entitled “Kingship and Kinship: Opposing or Complementary Ways of Envisaging Our Relationship to Material Creation?,” argues that both kingship and kinship, when rightly understood, significantly inform our understanding of the role of humans in relation to creation. Our kingly responsibilities stem from the special status we have as the

only earthly creatures created in the image of God. However, kingship does not imply tyranny, but ensures a just use of creation which protects biodiversity and forbids the hoarding of resources. Although kingship implies human superiority in a certain sense, the kingship concept, found in Benedictine and Franciscan spirituality, fosters an attitude of respect and appeals to the goodness of God’s creatures as a reason to treat them gently.

The fifth essay, written by Matthew Levering, professor at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago, is entitled “Be Fruitful and Multiply, and Fill the Earth: Was and Is This a Good Idea?” In the first section of this essay, Levering examines God’s command to Adam in Genesis 1:28, which is repeated to Noah in Genesis 9:1. The second section explores a very different perspective on human multiplication, found in the Christian environmentalist Bill McKibben’s “Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families.” McKibben argues that Americans need to limit family size to one child or face imminent, catastrophic ecological disaster. Having set forth this tension, Levering seeks in his third section to develop a theological framework for approaching the command to “be fruitful and multiply” in a manner open to concerns about population growth, while mindful of the divine pattern identified in Genesis and the church’s affirmation of life. Several interesting conclusions are presented in the fourth and final section of this essay.

The tenth essay was written by Christopher Franks, who teaches in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at High Point University in North Carolina. He is also a clergy member of the United Methodist Church. His essay, entitled “Knowing Our Place: Poverty and Providence,” focuses on the speeches of God in the Book of Job, chapters 38–41, which provide the most extended treatment of creation in the entire Bible. After examining the writings of Bill McKibben, Norman Wirzba, William Brown, and Richard Bauckham on this passage, Franks concludes that all four interpreters encourage us to share Job’s displacement, so that we too can be “put in our place” and learn humility and wonder at the incredible diversity of life. Franks then reflects on the poverty of Christ, which illustrates the qualities of self-offering love toward which the story of God’s providence summons us. Christ enacted a form of divine poverty that calls humanity toward a universal love that aims to encompass all of creation. To aim at poverty is to be free of the compulsion of felt needs. Instead, one interrogates one’s needs for the benefit of others.

The thirteenth essay, entitled “Rethinking Gluttony and Its Remedies,” was written by Chris Killheffer,

Book Reviews

a writer and activist who has worked on small organic farms in Ireland and Connecticut. Among patristic and medieval theologians, it was fairly common to refer to gluttony as the first sin, the one committed by Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit. Killheffer first summarizes the writings of two theologians who made the most influential contributions to the Christian understanding of this sin: John Cassian in the early fifth century and Gregory the Great in the late sixth century. Writing for a monastic setting, Cassian classified three distinct ways that gluttony is expressed, while Gregory, who moved the concern of gluttony outside the ascetic ideals of the monastery, made a couple of alterations to Cassian's classification scheme. Killheffer then discusses gluttony from a contemporary perspective and concludes his essay with some possible remedies. Citing modern writers such as Michael Pollan, he summarizes his argument with the following rules: "Always eat with other people. Always eat at a table. Don't eat food with ingredients you can't pronounce. Eat food, not too much, mostly plants." These guidelines mirror those of John Cassian whose teaching regarding food consumption can also be summarized in a few words: eat communally, eat simply, and eat moderately.

Topics addressed by some of the other essays include the following: sustainability from a Franciscan perspective; land use and household stewardship; animal flourishing and suffering; evolutionary theory and the promise of restoration for all creation; and liturgy as the space in which all creation is consecrated before the cross of Christ. Finally, David Vincent Meconi, who edited this book and teaches at St. Louis University, has included his own essay, entitled "Establishing an I-Thou Relationship between Creator and Creature."

While a few of the essays are more philosophical in nature, most of them combine theological wisdom with practical application. The majority of the authors teach at Catholic seminaries and universities, so environmental concerns are mainly addressed through the lens of Catholic theology. The Bible is referenced in most of the essays and an index of scripture references is provided at the end of the book. This book should be required reading for those in leadership positions within the Roman Catholic church. Anyone with an interest in environmental ethics from historical and contemporary Christian perspectives will also benefit from reading this book. Hopefully, by reading it, more Christians will strive to become better stewards of God's creation.

Reviewed by J. David Holland, Department of Biology, University of Illinois at Springfield, Springfield, IL 62703.



VORACIOUS SCIENCE AND VULNERABLE ANIMALS: A Primate Scientist's Ethical Journey by John P. Gluck. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. ix-xx + 313 pages. Hardcover; \$27.50. ISBN: 9780226375656.

"It's just a rat, for God's sake" (p. 36). So spoke a surprised lab supervisor to John Gluck at Texas Tech University in the 1960s. At the time, Gluck was an undergraduate student whose clumsy first attempt to remove brain tissue from a living rat resulted in the animal's death. It surprised him to learn that the rat's death mattered so little in that place (it was "an extra"), that there was no interest in determining the actual cause of death, and that the only thing remaining to do after the botched experiment was to throw the corpse into a garbage bin. His initial assumption that nonhuman subjects mattered was misguided, in the opinion of this supervisor. What else did he expect? It's just a rat.

This philosophical memoir (my term, though, cf. pp. 284-85) includes many such episodes. *Voracious Science and Vulnerable Animals* is the story of the author's evolving relationships with other creatures and his emerging awareness of the researcher's moral responsibility to them. He begins with his childhood fascination with wildlife and love for family pets, but he then charts the steady "erosion" of an instinctive abhorrence at causing harm to other living things. His own development of an "it's-just-a-rat" attitude was gradual, and he describes several small steps that, in time, wore down his childlike revulsion at cruelty. Among them is an account of hunting rabbits with friends—often maimed, not always killed "cleanly"—and another of temporary work on a ranch that included the brutal castration, branding, and dehorning of cattle (pp. 25-29). In both cases, the acceptance of others proved intoxicating and encouraged him to stifle any squeamishness about inflicting pain on defenseless animals. A similar craving to belong and gain the respect of others occurred while at university, especially from professors whose research, they insisted, required the sacrifice of some for the sake of a higher good. Their approval of the young scholar further steeled him against sentimentalism (see, e.g., p. 33).

But chinks in the logical armor defending against emotional attachment to research animals gradually emerged during his long career and much of the book documents how justifying deprivations, electric shocks, and more on monkeys and rats proved problematic. He builds that case in a variety of ways