

Augustinian voice is that she takes *love* seriously. In fact, taking sin seriously and taking injustice seriously are predicated on taking love seriously' (p. 179; see also Meilaender, p. 173). The analysis of this chapter moves from what Gregory dubs Augustine's 'better realism' in politics, to consider its implications for contemporary issues of torture and 'coercive interrogation' (pp. 184–85), and international humanitarian intervention (pp. 185–87), especially as Elshtain comments on these implications in her writings and as her Catholic faith, embraced at the end of her life, might have moved her to reassess some of them (p. 185).

Daniel Philpott's chapter follows Gregory's and returns our attention to Elshtain's *Sovereignty*. Where Meilaender contextualized Elshtain's thought within a plurality of Christian traditions (especially Lutheranism and Catholicism, sensitive to their differences, yet highlighting their common core of faith expressed in the Athanasian Creed), and Gregory reflected on Elshtain's Augustinianism, Philpott emphasizes what he considers the Thomistic elements in Elshtain's political thought. Asking what 'alternative' Elshtain offers readers to the autonomous, self-legislating sovereign ruler or sovereign self of modernity, Philpott answers pithily: 'Thomism', which locates limited human sovereignty under 'a transcendent God', and views it as intended to be 'informed [and guided] by natural law' (p. 192). From there, Philpott's essay travels through the histories of modern sovereignty and of international relations theory. In so doing, Philpott reflects on and lauds Elshtain's contribution to reviving religion as an important actor and rightful subject of study within political science and international relations.

This engaging trio of chapters, together with numerous others in Erikson's and Chevallier's fine volume, thus evoke what their authors see as Elshtain's scholarly achievements, and also raise interpretive and evaluative questions about Elshtain's thought. They point out directions that future scholarship might follow to extend Elshtain's research and inquiry, and to correct some of her conclusions as well, perhaps in key ways. For assistance in these tasks scholars of several disciplines can thank the editors of this volume on Elshtain's religious, ethical and political thought.

Jon Garvey, *God's Good Earth: The Case for an Unfallen Creation*

(Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019). 250 pp. \$30.00. ISBN 978-1-5326-5200-4 (pbk)

Chad Michael Rimmer, *Greening the Children of God: Thomas Traherne and Nature's Role in the Ecological Formation of Children*

Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019). 276 pp. \$33.00. ISBN 978-1-5326-5330-8 (pbk)

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In *God's Good Earth* Jon Garvey sets what he calls the 'traditional view' that creation has fallen as a result of human sin, against an alternative, experienced by Garvey as a personal revelation, that the world remains as it was created—good. Garvey's main concern is a

defence of divine providence as manifest in creation, while also maintaining the compatibility of faith and what he calls 'good' science. Bringing his medical and scientific background to bear alongside his ecclesial and theological experience, Garvey's case for a 'good earth' is situated in relation to debates on the question of evolution, 'origins science' and evangelical creation theology (p. xvii). Consistent with the reflections available on his popular blog, Garvey's position is supportive of evolution but defends God's ongoing active providence in creation and the account of a historical fall of humanity against what he calls a 'deist' theology of evolution in which God does not actively intervene.

Chapters 1–5 provide a passage-by-passage biblical foundation for a good creation, from Genesis through to the New Testament epistles. Chapter 1 argues for the providence of God working directly through creation, including natural disasters, illness and animal attacks. While Garvey's theological methodology overall is explicitly biblical, some of the detail in these chapters might be considered additional to the main thrust of the argument, including long biblical quotations that, even in a relatively accessible book such as this, might be considered unnecessary.

Chapters 6–8 address the question from the perspective of historical theology. These chapters form the core of the book, having been originally prepared as an independent article (p. xvii). The idea that a fallen creation is a relatively recent and minority view within Christian faith is well defended. Chapter 6 provides a survey of patristic interpretations of Genesis 3, while chapter 7 turns to the influence of the Reformation on changing attitudes to nature. This begins, unsurprisingly, with Calvin, although the connection with Calvin's doctrine of total depravity might have been more explicit. According to chapter 8 a concept of natural evil is not Christian theology at all, but a Renaissance innovation based on the classical myth of Prometheus, an idea developed in the final section. The discussion of the Promethean myth implicitly associates the development of a disordered understanding of creation with an optimistic anthropocentrism that is arguably not entirely overcome in this book.

Chapters 9–12 take a scientific perspective and adopt a slightly more polemical tone, addressing questions of evolution and intelligent design on the basis of God's active intervention in creation. These sections focus on one of Garvey's most striking contentions, that Tennyson's description of nature as 'red in tooth and claw', taken up by evolutionary theorists and New Atheists, has been vastly overstated. Garvey seeks to provide a corrective both to evangelical and scientific negative perspectives on creation through a view of its beauty and divinely given glory. In Genesis 1 God declares creation to be good, and so it must be, despite human perception sometimes to the contrary. The argument is so far convincing, based in persuasive scientific data while at the same time theologically significant. However, the attempt to put violence and pain into a broader perspective, combined with a strong commitment to God's providential intervention in history through nature, often sidesteps key pastoral and theological questions of theodicy. It risks appearing to dismiss the very real human and animal suffering present within the natural world while also making God the direct cause of suffering (e.g., pp. xvii, 126). I would have been fascinated to see Garvey engage on these issues with Christopher Southgate's *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), which addresses the theodical implications of animal pain and species extinction much more directly.

Garvey provides a comprehensive survey that spans biblical, theological, scientific and practical approaches to the question of the goodness of creation. His treatment directly addresses the concerns of his intended audience of conservative evangelical readers, although readers beyond this group may find passing references to ideas such as headship distracting (pp. 20, 23–24). Garvey's goal in this book is to be 'readable, but informed and multifaceted' (p. xvii). There may at times be a risk of over-simplification, as with the throw-away description of the Gospel as a 'game of two halves—creation and redemption' (p. xix), but the tone on the whole is suitable for its intended general audience, providing tools for the reader to address key contemporary issues in faith and science.

Chad Michael Rimmer's book is the latest in a century-long tradition of studies of Traherne as a nature mystic whose enjoyment of creation contains almost prophetic insight into the ecological challenges facing the modern world. Combining the theme of nature with Traherne's other major theme of child spirituality, Rimmer argues that Traherne provides the foundation for a theologically-informed pedagogical response to the looming ecological disaster. In the *Centuries*, Traherne complained that no-one in his youth taught the art of happiness. Rimmer takes Traherne's pedagogical concerns to heart, exploring how the promotion of childhood engagement with nature may provide grounds for hope in what has been termed a future 'Ecozoic Age' (p. 6).

Rimmer addresses Traherne's major themes of nature and childhood through two novel avenues. The first is that of the virtues—a central concern not just in Traherne's *Ethicks* but throughout his theological works. The second is a much more obscure idea to be found in one of Traherne's lesser-known treatises, *Inducements to Retirednes*. In Traherne's age, retirement signified a retreat from town into country, often considered beneficial for the physical and moral health of an individual. It also signified a spiritual retreat from the chaos of sinful society into private prayer and meditation. As Rimmer argues, Traherne's advocacy of 'retirement' was never a retreat from the world entirely but a retreat 'into creation' (p. 10).

Since the discovery of new major treatises by Jeremy Maule in 1997, there has been a push in Traherne scholarship to situate Traherne more firmly within his immediate intellectual context. Rimmer continues this trend in chapter 1, distancing Traherne from a long Platonist tradition and the great metaphysical poets of a previous generation, in favour of a picture of Traherne as a product of the Scientific Revolution. Rimmer captures well the nuances of scientific theories that while influential for modern empiricism can appear eccentric to modern eyes in their early-modern dress, specifically the Paracelsian inductive method.

Chapter 2 focuses on Traherne's major, yet still little-known theological work, *The Kingdom of God*, focusing on the virtues exhibited in and through creation. Traherne's moral theory in this work owes much to the Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, as well as to the Baconian and Paracelsian science that is the main epistemological focus of this chapter. Rimmer provides a necessary corrective to over-spiritualising readings of Traherne by interpreting the emanationist imagery of light as signifying physical connectedness between creatures as the foundation of a moral universe. It would be going too far however to dismiss the influence of mystical neo-Platonism altogether. One aspect of Traherne's genius is his sometimes convoluted combination of disparate intellectual influences into a jumbled yet beautiful whole.

Chapters 3–5 focus on the much shorter treatises, *Inducements to Retirednes* and *Seeds of Eternity*. Central to these chapters is the argument that retirement for Traherne is not a spiritual retreat into the self but a ‘practical theology of retiring among creation’ (p. 110). Again, the attempt to divorce Traherne from neo-Platonist spiritualising influences is perhaps a little overstated, but the epistemological arguments are persuasive. Against Cartesian rationalism or Hobbesian empiricism, Rimmer asserts, Traherne perceives the good through a sensory experience of creation. Interpreted through the theology of John Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas and Richard Hooker, and the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, sensory experience is shown to have not just epistemological but moral implications. Simply put, the encounter with a good creation makes us good, not just in its essence, but in the sensory experience of the physical and in the sociality of relationship with creation (p. 128). This perception is experienced through childlike wonder, defined as ‘an embodied way of “knowing”’ (p. 141). This is interpreted through contemporary child psychology, quoting Colwyn Trevarthen, on the innate ‘intersubjectivity’ of infants, which applies not just to human relationships but also to interactions with nature (p. 143). One of the most intriguing aspects of these chapters is Rimmer’s conjectures about Traherne’s early childhood, on the basis of child psychology and Traherne’s own writings, which are compelling if impossible to prove.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by exploring the implications of Traherne’s theology of nature for ‘moral education’ (pp. 13–14). Rimmer likens Traherne’s morality to a modern ‘ethics of care’; very appropriate given Traherne’s association of sin with ‘carelessness’. The child learns to care through first learning that it is cared for by creation itself, thereby overcoming egocentrism and anthropocentrism and leading to the virtue of love.

This monograph contains the focused and detailed argument to be expected of the publication of a doctoral dissertation. The style is elegant and readable if marred by a number of typos. The relevance of the organising question and the wide-ranging interdisciplinary approach have the potential to make this book of more general interest, providing a theological rationale to inform projects such as wild church, forest church or forest schools. In this light, it would have been interesting to see some of the contemporary and practical implications drawn out more explicitly.

A comparison of these two books is almost a case study for how differing methodologies can lead two projects concerned with closely related issues into very different results. Garvey and Rimmer are both concerned with humanity’s relationship with the natural world. In addressing this issue, they both defend the goodness of God’s creation. Both turn to an empirical or sensory experience of creation as evidence for this. Both draw upon the writings of the Restoration Anglican priest-poet Thomas Traherne to induct the reader into the divine glories of nature, although Traherne is the focus of Rimmer’s work, while Garvey’s is more illustrative. Both turn to a similar period in human history—the Reformation and Scientific Revolution—as marking an epistemological shift that has divorced humanity from the natural world (Rimmer, p. 7). Both are founded upon a fundamental belief in the goodness of God, and both emphasise God’s active participation in creation as the source of its goodness.

However, their perspectives and approaches are significantly divergent. The difference is one of perspective and of trajectory. Garvey’s perspective is one of critique, seeking to challenge a view current in post-Reformation evangelical thought by arguing

against the fallenness of creation. Rimmer's approach is more constructivist, looking for a theologically informed account of the moral education of children through encounter with the goodness of nature.

Their methodologies also look in different directions. From the perspective of a biblical evangelical theology, Garvey is concerned to defend the providence of God, emphasising God's ongoing providential intervention in creation. Rimmer's starting point is more earth-focused, beginning with a description of the current geological age of the 'Anthropocene', a world marked by human activity and increasingly human sin, and his theological argument is heavily informed by child psychology and pedagogy. Essentially, Garvey looks backwards and upwards—to the scriptures and a God's-eye view of the world, while Rimmer looks forwards and downwards—to the future of the planet and through the eyes of a child. These differences are borne out in the practical implications drawn out from their key arguments. Garvey, for example, adopts a providentialist view that the church should pray for God to intervene directly to stem climate change (p. 192). This rubs directly against the grain of Rimmer's key contention, that if children are taught to love God's creation truly, then humanity will be motivated to stem the tide of climate change ourselves.

The differences are not just methodological but profoundly theological, most particularly in the area of theological anthropology. Rimmer follows Traherne's optimistic theological anthropology, seeing the goodness of creation as continuous with the goodness of humanity created in God's image. This theological foundation makes humanity's relationship with creation one of participation and mutual care where the initiative is on the side of creation, which adopts a priestly role and ministers to humanity first (pp. 183–84). Garvey, on the other hand, maintains a steward-like separation between humanity and creation, exemplified by Traherne's image of every individual as a 'little Adam', a king for whom the world has been created for their enjoyment (p. 187). In Garvey's argument, this distinction does not preserve humanity's superiority as such but rather preserves God's creation from being tainted through contact with human sinfulness.

Despite their differences, both works face similar challenges, most particularly how to reconcile the goodness of creation with the problem of evil. Both ultimately turn to Romans 8 to describe human sinfulness as the cause of damage to the natural world, although Garvey also views creation as an instrument of God's judgement while Rimmer sees natural disasters as a mirror of human sinfulness. While instructive, this does not provide the resources to address the issue with sufficient breadth. Garvey appears at points more concerned with humanity's 'spiritual abuse' (e.g., pp. 169–70) of creation than its material exploitation and neglect, although the two go hand in hand, while Rimmer is focused firmly on the climate crisis and impending 'planetary breakdown' (p. 5). Traherne, ever the optimist, may provide another avenue through which to address the experience of suffering and evil. Traherne's theme of innocence is not confined to Eden or to his account of childhood bliss but addresses what it means to choose the good in spite of sin and suffering and not in ignorance of it (see E.S. Dodd, *Boundless Innocence in Thomas Traherne's Poetic Theology*, Ashgate, 2014). As such, it may provide an insight into what it means for Traherne to live like Adam in Eden here and now, to relate to creation as good while at the same time being confronted with pain and violence.

Another issue that faces both of these works is that of anthropocentrism. Many of the scriptures to which Garvey turns to provide an account of creation are ultimately concerned with humanity's relationship to God, which begs the question whether it is indeed possible to construct a theology of creation's goodness as distinct from its relationship to humanity. Garvey's account of mutuality between humanity and creation undercuts ego-centrism and anthropocentrism, but perhaps fails to fully confront the anthropocentrism implicit in much of Traherne's writings. Both might benefit from engagement on this issue with the animal theology of David Clough, as an exercise in decentring humanity in relation to the natural world.

Both works ultimately conclude that through love, joy and delight in God's good creation, humanity is led to a more caring relationship with the natural world. The question then becomes one of motivation (Rimmer, p. 15). For Garvey this is found in an understanding of humanity as a steward of God's good creation, loving God's creation because God does and as God does. For Rimmer, motivation is found in an understanding of humanity as a part of God's good creation. The child's wonder in their sensory experience of creation is the foundation of a virtuous and caring relationship to creation, through coming to the radical understanding that 'creation cares for us, because we are part of creation.' (p. 16). The reader will need to judge for themselves the practical implications of these different methodological journeys and the varied conclusions that they lead to.

Fabian Grassl, *In the Face of Death: Thielicke—Theologian, Preacher, Boundary Rider* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019). 292 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 978-1-5326-5547-0 (pbk)

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Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) was an outspoken critic of the Third Reich. The title of an early speech, 'Christ or Antichrist', delivered at a church conference signals his criticism. For his opposition to National Socialism, the Führer's deputy notified the young chair of theology at the University of Heidelberg that he was terminated from the faculty and unemployable as a theologian anywhere in Germany. To suppress his political resistance, the Nazis confined Thielicke to a small town in southern Germany and forbade him to write, speak or travel. From this location, nonetheless, he was able to do all three. His secret books were smuggled across the Swiss border and published anonymously. During the Allied air raids, Thielicke lectured weekly to some 3,000 people gathered in the Stuttgart Cathedral Church. Finally, Thielicke travelled to join a conspiracy group plotting to overthrow Hitler.

After World War II, Thielicke eventually became the first rector of the newly formed theological faculty at the University of Hamburg. He also filled the pulpit of the city's biggest church, the Great Church of St. Michael. On the Sundays that he preached, the 3,000-seat sanctuary filled to capacity as early as an hour before the start of the service, requiring police assistance to prevent traffic problems in the inner city. Without modern marketing, his sermons attracted the attention of atheists, nihilists and sceptics from a