

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

Cultivating a Contemporary Theology of Creation

Edited by

David Vincent Meconi, SJ



**SAINT PAUL
SEMINARY PRESS**

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA • 2021

Cover art: detail of fresco by Masolino da Panicale in the Basilica of San Clemente, Rome;
photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, OP

Cover design by Willem Mineur

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First published 2016 by

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Reprint published 2021 by

Saint Paul Seminary Press

2260 Summit Ave., Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021942851

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021942851>

Catholic Theological Formation Series

ISSN 2765-9283

ISBN 978-1-953936-02-8 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-953936-52-3 (ebook)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the 2016 paperback edition as follows:

Names: Meconi, David Vincent, editor.

Title: On earth as it is in heaven : cultivating a contemporary theology of creation /
edited by David Vincent Meconi, SJ.

Description: Grand Rapids, Michigan : Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016. |

Series: Catholic theological formation series

Includes bibliographical references and index

Identifiers: LCCN 2015045475 | ISBN 9780802873507 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Creation. | Catholic Church — Doctrines.

Classification: LCC BT695 .O57 2016 | DDC 231.7/65 — dc23

LC record available at <http://lccn.loc.gov/2015045475>

www.spspress.com

Introduction

Leading up to the 2015 release of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's groundbreaking encyclical on the environment, a group of scholars gathered at the Saint Paul Seminary on the campus of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, to spend long summer days discussing what the ancient Christian tradition might have to say about ecological stewardship and a faithful theology of solidarity with all of creation. These discussions occurred as Pope Francis was preparing *Laudato Si'*, and it was too early for any of us to draw from the vision he was about to promulgate. As rich as that convergence may have been, what is fascinating about the following fifteen essays is how closely they all parallel the major concerns, themes, and figures put forth by the Holy Father. Francis's care is exact, and his call is encouraging. Christians of good will must resist the contemporary dangers of mindless acquisition and the consequent squandering of the earth's rich resources. These and other concerns explain the timing of Francis's promulgation of *Laudato Si'*: to teach everyone today about "the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle" (*Laudato Si'*, hereafter LS, §16).

The theses of the following essays inevitably fall between two extremes. On the one hand, any contemporary care of creation must resist sacralizing

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subhuman creatures; on the other, we must refuse to reduce creatures to merely natural objects to be manipulated and exploited for human gain only. Pope Francis himself captured this balancing act well throughout *LS*, teaching that an ecological spirituality “is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinization of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility” (§90). Thus, the best of the Christian tradition may perhaps call creatures holy, but only God is absolutely and inherently sacred. He alone is the holiness in which all creatures participate, and with whom they can never be identified. So even though the goodness of creation is the litany through the opening pages of the book of Genesis, the Jewish people refused to follow their Mesopotamian neighbors in apotheosizing the visible order as a sacred entity apart from the author of its being. All things proclaim the greatness of God, but no one thing is God. Yet, today the tendency perhaps lies on the other extreme, wherein we all too glibly dismiss natural phenomena as raw data, able to be preyed upon and discarded as we humans find convenient. This functional reduction of creation to mere utility has occurred with an ever-increasing dismissal of the true nature of creation, especially of the human person, who stands as the frontier being, representing all levels of the visible order while still maintaining a supreme dignity over all that can be seen.

In Francis’s maneuvering between the Scylla of false divinization and the Charybdis of selfish exploitation, he is inevitably drawing from the theology of creation found most recently in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which rightly teaches, “A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself. In this latter case, one can go so far as to divinize nature or the earth, as can readily be seen in certain ecological movements.”¹ Accordingly, a Catholic approach to creation means honoring God by tending to his works with reverence and honest stewardship. Integrity is no longer only a human category. The Church is now calling all persons of good will to see that regard for the wholeness of the human person involves, to some degree, regard for the flourishing of nonhuman creation as well. Even though the human person may be the only

1. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: USCCB; Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 202, §463.

visible *imago Dei*, the *vestigia Dei* (traces of God) that surround each of us are to be tended to with God's own solicitude and sympathy.

In the second-century *Letter to Diognetus*, Christians heard that they were to be to this world what the human soul is to the body.² Just as the soul collects and unifies otherwise disparate matter into a purposeful and powerful body, the Christian faithful are to immerse themselves in the created order so as not only to give it purpose but to consecrate it and make it ever and everywhere easier for God's glory to be known through his created works. This care and Christianization of creation is something the Church is only now beginning to recover from her ancient treasury. For today we are more aware than ever that we live in a very interdependent world in an even more fragile ecosystem. Accordingly, Vatican II (1962-65) taught all people of good will that "the expectation of a new earth should not weaken, but rather stimulate, the resolve to cultivate this earth where the body of the new human family is increasing and can even now constitute a foreshadowing of the new age. Although earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, nevertheless its capacity to contribute to a better ordering of human society makes it highly relevant to the kingdom of God."³ No longer can Christians dismiss this earth; no longer can they talk merely of heavenly realities.

The Christian God is a Father who knows every sparrow that flies on earth and who takes care of every lily of the field (Matt 6:28; Luke 12:26-27); God is a Son who assumes created matter to himself, learned life at a carpenter's bench, and used seeds, wheat, and weeds to speak of the kingdom of God (Matt 13:1-9, 18-30); God is a Spirit who labors to free all of creation from its "slavery to corruption" (Rom 8:21) into the same glorious freedom of the children of God. The manner in which the incarnate Son chose to teach us is primarily a discourse on the theophoric nature of creation itself, as "the sense of the divineness of the natural order is the major premise of all the parables."⁴ The Christian creed affirms that this world was divinely willed by God (not wrestled from its original chaos into something manageable); this world is where God himself assumes the very elements of matter and humanity, and this created world is the place where his final consummation will occur, when all bodies will be resurrected forever. By creating, the God

2. Cf. *Letter to Diognetus*, in *Early Christian Writings*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (New York: Penguin Classics, 1987), 145, §6.

3. *Gaudium et spes*, §39, as found in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner, SJ, et al. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1092-93.

4. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Glasgow: Collins Press, 1935), 21.

of Genesis has chosen not to be everything but to be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28), desirous to be known in lesser beings, refracting his own perfections.

This is a story that has tremendous significance today. For who has not awoken to the various ecological crises of our world? Men and women today cannot help but look for solutions to the environmental destruction they both experience and hear reported daily. Likewise, many scholars are becoming more sensitive to the world’s vulnerability amid so many ecological threats and concerns. These thoughtful men and women enjoy a renewed boldness, unwilling to apologize for seeking ways to connect the central tenets of orthodox Christianity with a secular call to care for creation. It is the Christian’s job to remind the modern citizen that the earth deserves our care, paraphrasing G. K. Chesterton, *not* because she is our mother but because she is our sister.⁵ Many theologians and philosophers have thus begun to bring timeless principles to a rather recent conversation. They know that this new consciousness of the environment’s needs is best addressed, not through more politicized pleas, but through the great tradition of the great Church. In fact, *Laudato Si’* marks a new beginning, with the Church now “officially” speaking out in defense of environmental responsibility and even in favor of an ecological spirituality (LS §216), rightly understood. The Church is now poised to comment on this kaleidoscopic relationship between God, creation, and the human person in a way not possible even a generation ago. The world’s fragility has ushered in a new awareness, allowing us to draw from ancient tools that have for far too long been sheathed.

To respond to this new awareness, the scholars that gathered in the summer of 2014 to examine what the great Christian tradition might have to say about caring for creation were led by Robert Louis Wilken, the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the History of Christianity Emeritus at the University of Virginia, the keynote speaker of our days together. Setting the tone for the present volume, Wilken presents “The Beauty of Centipedes and Toads,” a provocative title introducing many important themes (and books) when looking at a contemporary Christian care of creation.

Drawing mainly from the Cappadocian Fathers, Wilken shows that a truly human person manifests the proper natural piety for all of God’s works, the lowliest of bugs and beings included. In fact, this was one of the major ways Augustine broke from the Manichaean deprecation of matter. When

5. In following St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis does open *Laudato Si’* by quoting the great saint’s canticle and calling the earth both our sister and our mother (LS §1) but then quickly calls creation our sister (§2) only.

members of this overly spiritualized gnostic sect mocked God for having created mice and frogs, Augustine chides them for acting like ignorant children in a master's workshop, making fun of things whose purpose and beauty they cannot fathom.⁶ In the same way, Wilken likewise uses the foundations of the Catholic tradition to show that, simply because the human person is the crown of creation, he or she is not all of creation. There is an entire world below and around us teeming with God's own life.

Consequently, each species of nonhuman creation has a particular purpose and thus role to play in God's overall economy. For this reason pivotal thinkers like the brothers Basil of Caesarea (d. 379) and Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 395) both composed a *Hexaemeron*, a lengthy commentary on the days of creation. Basil and Gregory turned to the six days of Genesis in both sermons and treatises to show not only the goodness of a God willing to share his existence and life with ontologically inferior beings — “centipedes and toads” — but also to extend his own solicitude for others. Those persons made in God's image and likeness can therefore imitate God by tending to his creation (cf. LS §77). This is how both Basil and Gregory root their moral vision of the world in the wild complexity and individuality of all that God has brought out of nothing. Wilken thus concludes his inaugural essay by asking about the compassionate heart — to see all of creation as God does, to love all creatures as their Creator does.

In “The Place of Faith in the Geography of Hope,” Dean Christopher J. Thompson, our host at the Saint Paul Seminary, aims to ensure that no creature whatsoever is reduced to a “resource” solely in order to be “used.” The exploitation of ecosystems, the transgenetic modification of creatures, as well as the whimsical destruction of life, are areas where Thompson sees we might be ever more vigilant with (and as) creatures. His essay develops six major areas. The first is his analysis of our fallen tendency to flee *natura* and thereby treat all creation as a lower substrate necessarily in need of human resistance and domination. Thompson appeals to Aquinas's engagement with the Albigensian movement and this group's heretical deprecation of the created order. Preaching and prayer happily now have a place in the Christian care for creation. Thompson then considers the role of *natura* in leading the rational soul to one common Creator (cf. LS §12); Thompson thus cleverly returns his readers to the neglected appreciation that the natural law reflects the divine law. Now care for creation also receives a moral element. The third area is a movement from what Thompson calls the stan-

6. Cf. Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* 1.16.25.

dard “theology of the body” to a “theology of embodiment.” What contemporary Catholicism should be concerned about, he argues, is not simply what happens with and in the human body but, rather, what happens when embodiment itself is factored in to theological discourse. What does it mean to be members in a community with other enfleshed beings? What does it mean to inhabit a particular location? What does it mean to be the kind of being who, as embodied, occupies the earth and yet, as intellectual, enjoys an interior life known to God alone?

This shift in emphasis brings about Thompson’s fourth concern, namely, to combat an encroaching “angelism” that has reduced the rational, human knower to a mind only. Here Thompson draws from contemporary thinkers who criticize the Magisterium for not being physicalist enough. Whereas the world thinks Christianity should content itself with discoursing on the things of heaven exclusively, Thompson desires to see more appreciation for what it means to be both soul and body.

The fifth area Thompson raises pertains to Catholic education (cf. LS §§ 209-32). Thompson wonders why more schools do not offer courses (and thus a vision) in agriculture and basic theologies of creation. Finally, he exhorts the reader to consider how we choose to interact with nonhuman creatures. What modifications and greater awareness of our role as stewards might we make when considering our habits and default tendencies toward the grandeur of the world around us?

In “The Teleological Grammar of the Created Order in Catholic Moral Discourse,” Steven A. Long utilizes his expertise in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas to show that all Christian discussions about the natural order must rediscover the theonomic character of creation. Long shows that, because divine governance reaches to all things, to understand the creation rightly is to understand created order as a participation in the eternal law. Natural law is nothing other than a rational participation in the eternal law, but this rational participation presupposes a prior divine ordering of creation, a “passive participation” in the eternal law that extends to all things.

There is a certain limited participation of the eternal law proportionate to the creature: “Thus since all things subject to divine providence are ruled and measured by eternal law . . . it is evident that all things participate somewhat in the eternal law, insofar as from its being imprinted on them they have their inclinations to their proper acts and ends.”⁷ The passive participation in the eternal law, from which all things have their inclinations to their acts

7. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 91, art. 2.

and ends, is shared by all creatures (including the human person, who does not cause the unified order that defines him, and whose rational appropriation provides the content for natural law). Such passively participated order presupposes the human person's rational participation, which is the natural law. When this transcendent character of passively participated order is grasped, we begin to appreciate the wonder of the world (cf. LS §199n141), as Thomas's insights rightly invite. The created order is an imprint of the eternal law, and this "imprint" (as Long names this teleological order, which is an impress of the divine wisdom) is precisely how all creatures enjoy and manifest their agency and purpose. In the divine providence, this participation in the eternal law conditions from within even the gift of revelation and our contemplation of it.

Long shows why this is a crucial move to make, for creation is humanity's point of contact with our Creator. It is the place where we first learn of divine generosity, participation, and purpose (cf. LS §79). As he beautifully writes, creation is "the home of our poetry, the stuff of wonder and beauty, the primal beginning of our science." Moreover, to know ourselves fully and to understand the higher causality of grace, we must know creation as well. We enfleshed souls cannot truly come to appreciate the depths and wonder of our own existence until we open ourselves up to the movements and meaning of matter. Insofar as the human person is thus the apex of all creation, a microcosm of existence, life, vegetation, sensation, and reason — all of creation is recapitulated in the human. Furthermore, the common good of the created universe — the divinely instilled order of creation — is a primordial divine gift that conditions from within man's contemplation of God and man's elevation and transfiguration in the life of grace. The prime significance for man of the divine ordering of the cosmos is thus its role in fecundating and perfecting our contemplation, which continues even within the pedagogy of grace. While lower created good is indeed ordained to the service of man, it together with man is part of a divinely ordained order defining the common good of the universe. This is an order that is not merely one of potential use or technical transformation — as important as these are — but of divine instruction and beauty. The importance of human stewardship of lower goods is thus manifested as extending beyond simple allocation or technical transformation of lower goods and is tied to the honoring of divine wisdom in creation and to its contemplation in nature and in grace.

Marie George is professor of philosophy at St. John's University, New York, where she teaches environmental ethics. Recipient of several awards from the John Templeton Foundation for her work in science and religion

(including an interdisciplinary grant on the evolution of sympathy) and author of *Stewards of Creation: What Catholics Need to Know about Church Teaching concerning the Environment* (St. Catherine of Siena Press, 2009), she brings unique insights to this volume. While many writings on the environment focus on Genesis naming the human a “steward” or “servant” of creation, George’s essay, “Kingship and Kinship: Opposing or Complementary Ways of Envisaging Our Relationship to Material Creation?,” makes the much-needed point that men and women’s care of creation requires the exercise of their God-given sovereignty.

George opens her essay with a rare description of human stewardship found in the tradition, namely, the office of kingship. Quoting John Paul II, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* teaches that “God willed that man be the king of creation” (§460). A king is not a tyrant; dominion is not ruthless domination. We have been charged with caring for the totality of earthly creatures, which individually and as parts of a greater whole give glory to God. In George’s mind, such kingship evokes a simultaneous sense of kinship: we are only parts of creation and, with other creatures, share God as our common source and end (cf. LS §116). Our kingship also consists in what George calls “intellectual mastery,” that is, in understanding the natures of various creatures, an understanding that ultimately leads us to knowledge of the Creator. Here we are brought into the world of St. Francis and St. Pope John Paul II, men who saw the divine life sustaining and reflected in all that is. In this way, the human person is motivated to join the rest of creation in giving glory to God.

Harkening back to God’s first commandment to his creatures, Matthew Levering looks at the pressing and very politicized question of human population and sustainability. Levering, the James N. and Mary D. Perry Family Foundation Professor of Theology at Mundelein Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago, is a most prolific author, with numerous scholarly essays and sixteen monographs, including *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation* (Baker Academic, 2014) and *Mary’s Bodily Assumption* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2014). Included here is his “‘Be Fruitful and Multiply, and Fill the Earth’: Was and Is This a Good Idea?” wherein Levering keeps a very influential work firmly in his crosshairs. In dialogue throughout, mainly with Bill McKibben’s *Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families*, Levering cheekily asks whether God’s commandment to “be fruitful and multiply” really was a good idea. Maybe we somehow misread the signs; maybe today’s food shortages, incessant wars, climate changes, and other ecological disasters only show that the human race can no longer be trusted to increase as it wills.

As Levering builds his case, he never dismisses the global threats of our easily broken ecosystem, nor does he brush aside the call to responsible parenthood; instead, he brings us through these problems to uphold even more brilliantly the intrinsic good of every human life. While Levering also calls for many forms of ecological conversion, he is never willing to follow McKibben and question the inherent beauty of every human birth (cf. LS §50). The panic many people feel when watching the nightly reports of global warming and overly populated cities will be overcome not by eradicating human life but by embracing all humans anew. In this way Levering helps us understand how God's incessant command to "be fruitful and multiply" still stands as the foundational call to those willing to listen truly. The good Lord has deigned to rely on creatures to advance his kingdom, which will be done not by eradicating humans but only by receiving them rightly.

No Catholic volume on creation would be complete without an essay from a follower of the beloved St. Francis of Assisi. Sr. Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF, PhD, is professor of theological ethics at Catholic Theological Union and holder of the Erica and Harry John Family Endowed Chair in Catholic Ethics. Her recent book *Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide to Sustainable Living* (Liturgical Press, 2012) has earned the acclaim of many. Like Pope Francis, Nothwehr too relies on what she refers to as a clear brown thread in turning to the treasures of Franciscan spirituality. In her essay here, "Bonaventure of Bagnoregio's *imitatio Christi* as an Agapistic Virtue Ethics," Nothwehr uses the Seraphic Doctor to resituate creation not in fallen humanity's utilitarianism, but in the Christ-event. With Bonaventure's Christology guiding her thoughts, Sr. Nothwehr holds up the Father's call to imitate his Son (*imitatio Christi*) as the remedy for anthropogenic global warming (cf. LS §§23-25).

Nothwehr's central argument involves snatching creation out of the hands of those who see matter as nothing more than that which can be manipulated for personal convenience and putting it back in the pierced hands of the Incarnate Word. It is Bonaventure's Franciscan Christology, then, that provides future generations with hope (cf. LS §§11, 66). The deleterious effects of climate change need not have the last word, for in resituating the world in Christ, we can sacramentally behold the world again rightly, replacing (in the words of Nothwehr) a "mathematical objectivity" with a "sacramental sensitivity." By separating the use of creation from its Creator's intentions, fallen humanity unwittingly separated the human from the divine realm. A christological and Franciscan moral vision therefore seeks to

reunite the two by placing the world firmly back in the divine person who became human for love of the very same world.

John A. Cuddeback is professor and chairman of the Philosophy Department at Christendom College. His book *True Friendship: Where Virtue Becomes Happiness* was republished in 2010, and his essays and reviews have appeared in *Nova et Vetera*, *Thomist*, and *Review of Metaphysics*, as well as in several volumes published by the American Maritain Association. His website www.baconfromacorns.com is dedicated to the philosophy of the household and would prove valuable to the readers of these pages. His “Restoring Land Stewardship through Household Prudence” examines the truest sense of economy, as its etymology denotes — rule (*nomos*) of the household (*oikos*). In his chapter he looks at the household and what the great minds of our tradition have thought about its proper functioning, and he finds therein the first principles of the right practice of land stewardship.

Cuddeback begins with Aristotle’s understanding of the household as a natural society that is ordered through domestic prudence, not to the amassing of domestic comforts, but to the true flourishing of the family and the wider *polis*: “Thus it is clear that household management attends more to men than to the acquisition of inanimate things, and to human excellence more than to the excellence of property which we call wealth.”⁸ Central to Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s view of the household is the notion that the pursuit of wealth is given limit and order by the vision and intention of the good human life (cf. LS §80n52). However, as Cuddeback argues, dominant Western economic models tend to up-end the order of the household, abandoning the disposition of land, labor, and other human goods to the logic of market forces.

With the industrial revolution, land, like labor, tended to be reduced to a commodity, more and more removing it from the proper purview of the prudence of the householder. True environmental stewardship, Cuddeback argues, will seek to approach the land differently, reestablishing the priority of prudence over the market and thereby participating in God’s own care for the earth (cf. LS §§28-32). Aquinas’s understanding of economy, household, and human prudence points to a stewardship of the land that can be practiced by all people — a stewardship that begins in the home and, by God’s providential design, bears great fruit for generations to come.

Faith Pawl teaches philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. She received her doctorate in philosophy from St. Louis

8. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.13, 1259b18-20.

University, where she concentrated on animal suffering as an evidential challenge to the rationality of traditional theism. Included here is Pawl's "Flourishing and Suffering in Social Creatures," where she continues this interest. Pawl contends that human care of nonhuman animals is essential to all of creation because if we recognize that animals can actually enjoy certain goods (which most do), we should also recognize and try to make sense of suffering in order to alleviate animal pain (cf. LS §§34-37). Doing so requires a more complete understanding of what constitutes animal flourishing. According to Pawl, a deeper understanding of animal flourishing serves an apologetic rationale as well: Christians are better equipped to respond to challenges to the rationality of theism that appeal to the suffering of animals as evidence against God's existence.

As Pawl sees it, for human theists, the relationship with God and with one another constitutes their greatness. If relationship and connectedness is what characterizes human well-being, might it not be the same with many of the nonhuman animals similar to us? This is why Pawl turns to the savannah baboon and the incredible interrelationality this creature clearly exhibits. If so, should those who claim to have a special vocation to care for God's creation also hear within that call the duty to care not only about alleviating animal pain but also restoring right relationships among those creatures whose good life is constituted by social harmony? This is not so much a theodicy trying to make sense of animal suffering but, rather, a mandate: both to recognize where humans deprive many animals of their God-given nature to be in concord with one another and to strive to restore order to creation in a way that promotes animal social flourishing. In this way humans come, once again, to realize their own distinct purpose on earth by serving, while also realizing a shared conscious experience with other creatures who, like ourselves, are also made for communion with others.

Paul M. Blowers is the Dean E. Walker Professor of Church History at Emmanuel Christian Seminary in Johnson City, Tennessee. His primary specialization is early and Byzantine Christianity, and he recently published a gloriously comprehensive study, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford University Press, 2012). His essay here, "Unfinished Creative Business: Maximus the Confessor, Evolutionary Theodicy, and Human Stewardship in Creation," draws from Maximus (d. 662) to speculate how Christ's promise of full restoration to all of creation might affect our discussions on evolutionary theories, where death, tragic loss, and waste appear necessary.

The traditional Christian narrative proceeds with the belief that decay,

destruction, and death are all the result of human disobedience. Yet, contemporary evolutionary theories realize that biological growth demands constant cosmic change and thus the inevitable cessation and genesis of new forms of life. As such, “animal pain” (in the words of C. S. Lewis) seems to be part and parcel of the world’s natural trajectory. A seventh-century Byzantine monk may not have answers directly pertaining to contemporary evolutionary theories, but in Blowers’s hands, Maximus is able to speak to these insights (drawn mainly from Christopher Southgate’s 2008 monograph *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*). Approaching Maximus through a Balthasarian lens of “theo-drama,” Blowers thus sees in Maximus’s “cosmic Christ” a love divested of self for the sake of creatures (cf. LS §236). This kenotic love not only affects all of creation but effects a union with all suffering and death. Accordingly, the “new heaven and new earth” promised in the Christ-event is extended to all creation, especially for those beings that were deprived in this life.

Christopher A. Franks teaches in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at High Point University in High Point, North Carolina, and is also a clergy member of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. Among his recent publications is *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas’s Economic Teachings* (Eerdmans, 2009). In “Knowing Our Place: Poverty and Providence” Franks uses the image of suffering Job to ask what a “gentle life” might look like. Like Job, each of us can persevere faithfully among the trials of this world only if we first trust in the providence of God in the very concrete circumstances in which each person finds himself or herself circumscribed. As long as we question whether God is laboring in creation on our behalf, we will never allow ourselves to love or be loved because we will always remain suspicious and defensively aloof (cf. LS §§79-80). Franks thus shows that “knowing our place” does not mean being apathetically content with the status quo, but being more readily grateful and reliant upon God for and in all things.

Adopting a posture of gratitude and dependence can lead to a particularly Christian care of our world because only then can we see how God is patient with the countless processes of creation. Even Job’s Leviathan is a delight to God because God alone knows perfectly that he and not some creature — however menacing — has the final word over what is. Environmental problems should therefore not frighten the human race into defensiveness and a desire to trample natural threats underfoot, but to acknowledge God’s care in and through all creation. This is what Franks sees as “a trajectory drawing toward God-likeness, a trajectory whose contours are best glimpsed

in terms of the defenseless poverty of Christ.” The poor and pierced Christ thus emerges from this essay as the way we make sense of this world in all its diversity and even depletions. Only in Christ and Christ’s own are our current torments transfigured into our eternal ornaments (cf. LS §241). For the humanity of God in Christ invites all of us to embrace, not eradicate, our creatureliness. Here we can trust the providence of the Father and enter his creation more trusting, less self-protective, and more charitable.

When Jonathan J. Sanford delivered his excellent essay, he was professor of philosophy and the associate vice president for academic affairs at Franciscan University of Steubenville; now he is dean of the Constantin College of Liberal Arts at the University of Dallas. He received his doctorate from SUNY Buffalo under Jorge J. E. Gracia and is the founding director of the Franciscan University Press and the author of the recently published *Before Virtue: Assessing Contemporary Virtue Ethics* (Catholic University of America Press, 2015). In his “Nature and the Common Good: Aristotle and Maritain on the Environment,” Sanford enlists the Philosopher, alongside the great French Thomist Jacques Maritain (d. 1973), to ask why it is important that we care for creation. The command to care for the environment is of course embedded in the first pages of Scripture, but human disobedience has brought blight upon God’s good creation. Abel the farmer is brutally murdered by his brother Cain, who, as Scripture tells us, is the founder of cities.

Is this to suggest that those who cultivate the land are closer to God than those who choose to dwell in cities? Sanford enlists the help of Aristotle and Maritain to arrive at an understanding of our obligation to discern this question. The obligation to be good stewards, Sanford argues, is grounded in our nature, and our nature, properly understood, is political (cf. LS §231). Following Maritain, Sanford argues that the deeper roots of our political nature, and thus our reasons for caring for the earth, find their “richest soil” in God. Whereas some environmentalists argue that civilization is a threat to the earth, Sanford argues that, by means of civilization, we can acknowledge and exercise our responsibility to care for our environs and all those other environs to which they are connected.

Paige E. Hochschild appears next, introducing many of us to the Canadian social critic George Grant (d. 1988). Hochschild is currently assistant professor of theology at Mount St. Mary’s University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where she teaches historical and systematic theology, as well courses in philosophical anthropology. She publishes widely, in *Studia Patristica*, *Nova et Vetera*, and *Thomist*, and her outstanding *Memory in Augustine’s Theological Anthropology* was published in 2012 by Oxford University Press; she is

currently engaged in research on Augustinian influences in modern Catholic theology (especially Daniélou and Congar). Hochschild continues this approach in “Knowing the Good of Nature: St. Augustine and George Grant,” where she argues that central Augustinian themes regarding creation can be helpful in understanding Grant’s own call to contemplate and not dominate nature. That is, if we are ever going to grow in study and in true wisdom, we need to return to a unified vision of the sciences and to a deeper appreciation for the inherent glory of every creature.

Enlisting a long line of significant scholars, Hochschild builds her case for a metaphysical defense of nature. She first draws from Augustine’s lengthy commentary *De Genesi ad litteram* to showcase an approach to natural philosophy that refuses to reject the Trinity’s continual creation. As he writes and thinks, Augustine clearly delights in the “distinctions and complexity” of creation, relishing not only each word of Scripture but each created thing as a participated instantiation of God’s own goodness. Onto this stage, Hochschild ushers in George Grant and his desire to restore the environmental and ecological issues within a broader question of justice. From Grant we are challenged out of our complacency (cf. LS §59); the critique is even harsher for smug individuals who today expect nothing more from self and neighbor than technological efficiency and moral vacuity. It is a matter of social justice that we cease now reducing the human person to a consumer and the rest of creation to an enemy to be defeated (cf. LS §109).

Chris Killheffer is a writer and activist based in New Haven, Connecticut. His many essays exploring the relationship between Christianity and agriculture have appeared in such journals as *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* and *Pilgrim: A Journal of Catholic Experience*. Killheffer has worked on small organic farms in Connecticut and Ireland, and for many years he served on the board of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut, an organization that promotes sustainable growing practices and food systems. In “Rethinking Gluttony and Its Remedies,” Killheffer draws from ancient monastic sources to show how modern insights into the nature and need for proper eating have their roots in the first few centuries of Christian reflection on food. And why not? Was it not a piece of fruit that separated us creatures from our Creator? Is it not bread and wine that the Lord uses to continue his incarnation throughout all the earth?

Killheffer very cleverly shows that today’s “foodies” and the concerns we see glamorously written about and aired on various cable stations dedicated to eating smartly can be traced back to early Christian, especially monastic, literature. Eating the needed amount and not too much or too little, eating

in community (“with the brethren”) when available, eating at a table and not on the go, and consuming foods and drinks in a way that respects the movements of nature as well as distributive justice for others — all are gustable concerns traceable back to many fathers of the Church. Drawing mainly from John Cassian (d. 435), as well as Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), Killheffer makes his case in a helpful and convincing way, teaching us that gluttony was never understood simply as overeating but eating wrongly. In contrast stands the Word made flesh, who longs to nourish his Church with his own body and blood (cf. LS §236).

In my “Establishing an I-Thou Relationship between Creator and Creature,” I explore the beautiful exchanges with inanimate and nonhuman creation among those who live on a different level than most people enjoy. I am aiming in these pages for a certain thaumatography, writing in order to elicit a wonder at the awe-filled way creatures and their Creator interact on seemingly personalistic terms (cf. LS §81). The psalms are replete with creatures praising their God, singing out to him and moving back in pious fear. Similarly, so many scenes in the New Testament reveal a God who not only speaks to his followers through the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, but also addresses fevers directly (Luke 4:39) and curses fruit trees (Mark 11:25), thereby engaging such creatures with a second-person “I-Thou” familiarity.

I accordingly argue that, the more one grows in godliness, the more one becomes able to “speak” to all creatures and, in turn, hear their own response. When I was a young boy, I remember walking into our kitchen only to see my Italian-born grandmother, Avelia Meconi, kiss a piece of stale bread before throwing it away. I quizzically inquired why she would do such an odd thing. “That is the food Jesus became,” was her response. This scene taught me early on that there is a type of person who appreciates God’s presence in things more powerfully and personally than most. Mia Nonna proved to be quite the Catholic intellectual, as I came to learn that both Augustine and Aquinas also argue that the ultimate ground of all reality is not just impersonal *esse* but the eternal triune relationship between persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. LS §§238-40). This is what the theologian knows, this is what the poet senses — that underneath all creatures is found a Trinity, who acts in time and space in order to bring all things into personal communion with him.

Like all of creation, the final essay concludes in liturgy. Sr. Esther Mary Nickel, RSM, PhD, SLD, is an associate professor and teaches sacred liturgy and sacramental theology at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Denver, Colorado. She completed her doctorate in agronomy and plant genetics at the University of Minnesota and until 1994 was engaged in farming and

research in Minnesota. Her studies continued in Rome, where she completed a baccalaureate in sacred theology at the Angelicum (STB). She then continued graduate work at the Pontifical Institute at St. Anselm's, where she completed a pontifical license and doctorate in sacred liturgy. She serves on various governing boards for both liturgical and rural concerns. A recent publication entitled "Rogation Days, Ember Days, and the New Evangelization" (*Antiphon* 16, no. 1 [2012]: 21-36) includes her interest in rural life, agriculture, and liturgy.

Nickel's essay "The Liturgical Theology of the Participation of Creation in the Sacred Triduum" concludes this volume by showing how the Church's rituals depend on the movement of the seasons, the fruits of the earth, and the awareness that the entire Christian creed is one of making supernatural what would otherwise be simply ordinary, beginning in the womb of Mary. Nickel telescopes this story into the three days of the Sacred Triduum in order to show succinctly the centrality of sacramentality (cf. LS §§233-37). During this time the oils are blessed, the feet are washed; the wood of the cross is venerated, and the fasting commences once again. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in darkness until the candle (and the bees that made it) is exalted as the sun prepares to rise. Now the baptismal waters make new those who approach, the bread and the wine are again consecrated and consumed, and the stone is rolled away, speaking to us of eternally new life.

At the heart of *Laudato Si'* lies Pope Francis's revolutionary vision of a world cared for by faithful stewards who, at every turn, realize that the cosmos they inhabit is first a gift to them from a God who loves them in and through all things (cf. LS §100). The following fifteen essays foreshadow Francis's call to treat God's gifts rightly in smart and sensitive ways, furthering Catholic social teaching by helping the Church see how the divine dwells not in the saints and the sanctuary alone. Thoughtful Christians thus realize that the Creator is present to them in the land they trod, the food they eat, and the air they breathe. Reconciling all of creation to this God is the work of Jesus Christ, but a work in which he calls all his faithful to participate. Caring for our common heaven and earth therefore proves to be an eschatological exercise. It is how we fundamentally show forth not only our filial gratitude but responsible dominion and Christian charity as well. No creature is ultimately separate from any other. How we treat this world the Father has given us for a time may just be how we are treated in eternity.

DAVID VINCENT MECONI, SJ
Feast of St. Isidore the Farmer, 2015