

Creation's Praise of God

An Ecological Theology of Non-Human and Human Being

Submitted by Dominic John Coad to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology.

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Abstract

This thesis is the articulation of a doctrine of creation centred on the concept of creation's praise. It aims to make care for the environment a habitual expression of Christian faith by fostering a kinship between human and non-human. The thesis attempts to achieve this by developing the claim that non-humanity and humanity are united in a joint project of praise. This argument is developed through bringing biblical texts into conversation with voices from the Christian tradition and, in so doing, trusting that Scripture might allow us to know the presence of God in our own context.

Creation's praise consists in its ontological relationship to God, the source of all being and sustainer of the cosmos. In the diverse particularity of each thing the glory of God is actively displayed as an offering of praise and there is no created thing in the cosmos which does not participate in this symphonic worship. Yet suffering and death are intrinsic to the character of living things and God actively resists natural evil which God did not will. Creation joins God in this resistance and suffering and death are transfigured into ever-greater flourishing which deepens creation's praise.

Evil, however, remains a painful mystery and its final resolution awaits the Eschaton. Creation's praise, therefore, looks to a heavenly fulfilment. Such fulfilment will be found in Christ and be characterised by the final unity of all creation, a unity which will not dissolve its particularity. Anticipating this fulfilment, humanity act as priests of creation, summarising and uniting creation's praise in themselves and presenting it to God. Humanity's priesthood is a task of service which does not mask but rather highlights the particularity of non-human praise.

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