Review essay by Alastair McIntosh of 2 books on ecotheology and climate change, also, Timothy Gorringe's review of my "Riders on the Storm: Climate Change and the Survival of Being".

Ernst M. Conradie and Hilda P. Koster, eds.

T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Theology and Climate Change

London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2020. Pp. xiv, 713. Hb. £140.

ISBN 978-0-567-67515-6

Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Jörg Persch, eds.

Eco-Theology: Essays in Honor of Sigurd Bergmann

Leiden: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021. Pp. xvi, 311. Hb. €99.

ISBN 978-3-506-76036-4

The climate emergency is an emergent emergency, in two ways. First, it is emergent as the physical impact on planetary ecosystems becomes exponentially pronounced. Second, it is emergent in human consciousness at this stage in the evolution of life on earth. Notwithstanding what climate change deniers say on the one hand, and alarmists (who exaggerate the science) say on the other, we mostly only know what we think we know about climate change because of the science of climate change.

Ethical concerns about extracting what the earth has hidden in its crust are not new. Roman writers were troubled by the impacts of resource extraction. The sixteenth-century mining engineer Georgius Agricola summed up their position: what nature had secreted gets 'dug out by wicked men, who as poets say, are the products of the Iron Age' (*De Re Metallica*, tr. Herbert C. Hoover and Lou H. Hoover, London: Mining Magazine, 1912, 7). Fossil fuel extraction takes pollution to another level. However, it was not until 1856 that the American inventor and women's rights campaigner, Eunice Newton Foote, first experimentally demonstrated the greenhouse effect. Her paper, forgotten until its recent rediscovery, was read out by a male colleague on her behalf at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, three years before John Tyndall's more recognised work.

The UN's annual 'conference of the parties' (world governments) began only in 1995 in Berlin, paving the path to the recent hosting by the UK and Italy of COP 26 in Glasgow. Most of humankind has therefore had just a single generation to grasp the scale of the unfolding apocalypse, with 'Fridays for Future' school climate strikers, Extinction Rebellion and more established environmental groups leading the way in raising consciousness.

If theology is to do with matters of ultimate concern, what discipline could be more apt to witness this apotheosis – the revelation of the 'gods' – in responding to 'the signs of the times'? Herein lies the importance of these two books. Brill have made a beautiful job of the Bergmann tribute. It aims to offer insight into the 'spiritual roots of the current disaster' (ix), drawing mainly on Nordic and Germanic scholars. With a ribboned spine and bookmark, it comes with an academic price tag, but not as high as some. Strangely, the e-book is priced the same as the hardback. In odd commonality with many a festschrift, some of the chapters make little or no reference to how their topic is situated within the work of the person whom they are honouring. But any sense that this volume might be a dumping ground for unrelated unpublished work is dispelled, not least, by Heimbrock and Persch's useful editorial, which structures the fourteen essays into five sections: crisis, nature, spirit, politics and praxis. I sample one chapter from each of the first four sections.

'Crisis' opens with Tage Kurtén setting ecotheology in the context of Bergmann's life-work. Focusing discussion through the lens of both covid and the making of compost, we are shown that Bergmann puts aside the distinction between the sacred and the profane, pointing us towards a 'compostmodern' theology that is 'joined in and by the Holy Spirit' as a path to peace on earth (6). 'Nature' includes Archbishop Antje Jackelén's exploration of order and chaos in creation theology. One might wonder why she is the only woman contributor. Is this good enough, in a world in which Greta Thunberg has done so much, in an era when theology must speak to the full spectrum of human experience? 'Spirit' sees Jon Skarpeid join the call for the 'liberation of Mother Earth', nodding to Sallie McFague and to Hindu monistic cosmology (157). Glad to see this, I could not help but reflect on the wealth of ecofeminist theology: where these voices were, and how they relate to Bergmann's corpus. I was left wondering where Bergmann might stand on gendered aspects of embodied theology, even incarnate theology. 'Politics' sees the veteran Ulrich Duchrow marching as to war at the contradictions in the UN's seventeen 'sustainable development goals'. Justifiably, he takes aim at the fetish in goal 8 of 'sustainable economic growth' (168). The 'reality of the beast, imperial capitalism, is catching up', he warns, calling for a kairos moment, a recovery of Hebrew (including Christian) apocalyptic theology that might be equal to the task of naming and rejecting the beast (186). But how?

And so to the closing three chapters on 'praxis': in the first, Jan-Olav Henriksen gives a welcome and all-too-rare (in academic theology) nod to religious experience. Focusing on the Lutheran Hope Cathedral in the Norwegian town of Fredrikstad, this meditation ties in with Bergmann's interest in nature, art and architecture. Next, Thor André Skrefsrud anchors us to the

suffering of the poor and the imperative that the theology of our times 'ought to be designed as ecological liberation theology' (quoting Bergmann, 237). Finally, the book's co-editor Hans-Günter Heimbrock closes with a rallying call to fill the 'lacuna' that European practical theology has towards nature. He concludes: 'A concept of action in theology would need further clarification in order to distinguish and to relate anthropological insights about religion as human activity to the classical theological notion of God's action, especially qualified in the horizon of God's passion in Christ' (268).

That sentence epitomises most of the theological timbre of this volume. I was left with a sense that most of the contributors could see the lacunae, yet their whole career trajectory, institutional embedding and religious conditioning led them to languish in it. Those topics of the closing section on praxis – spiritual experience, solidarity with the poor and nature, and pastoral aspects of practical theology – pinpoint where our work-in-progress lies. But we need more real-life grounding in schools of Christian theology. I live in Govan, the socially hard-pressed former shipbuilding district of Glasgow. When thinking and speaking about theology, I often have to pull myself up sharply and apply what I call 'the Govan test', namely, 'Would I be able to explain this on the streets of Govan?' Would it answer to the spiritual hunger and the longing heart of the drug addict, the prostitute, the refugee?

Jesus didn't talk in abstracts of theology. He showed theology on the street and from the mountainside. He fed the hungry. He taught in spiritual stories. He drew in 'unclean' women, the poor and the marginalised. This volume therefore left me pondering the course of academic theology. I wondered how far the hoops through which one has to jump to acquire a distinguished post in major schools of theology require neglect of doing 'theology from the underside of history', and maybe costly solidarity with 'the power of the poor in history' (to use the titles of Gutiérrez's books of 1977 and 2004). I thought of Cornel West's recent resignation from Harvard Divinity School on account of what he felt to be its 'spiritual bankruptcy'. And I wondered if it's time to overturn some tables.

How far does this critique of the Bergmann festschrift apply to T. and T. Clark's landmark volume on the Christian theology of climate change? Across nearly 50 chapters, a very different tone is set – a dialogical one, often with responses to chapters, often coming from voices from the margins.

For example, over a mere four pages (509–12), Fulata Moyo offers 'An African Eco-Woman's Response to Sigurd Bergmann' and his chapter 'The Spirit and Climate Change'. She begins by invoking 'God's Spirit brooding over the deep to facilitate interconnectedness, produce, protect, sustain and renew life [...] to overcome the climate change crisis'. A member of the Circle

of Concerned African Women Theologians, she magnifies Mary's motherhood alongside Christ's kenosis. To lift up Mary, she argues, is to provide a vehicle for the resilience of invisible grassroots women at the sharp end of climate change. Roundly, she takes issue with Bergmann for placing 'the Holy Spirit's role within creation theology rather than within incarnational theology'. This privileges a relationship of stewardship with creation, one that is based on patriarchal models of ownership and top-down management. Moyo rounds off her stinging jeremiad: 'If Bergmann's pneumatologically articulated vision of the Ecocene would have been located in incarnation theology and a relational model of kinship, it would allow for an ecowomanist envisioning of ecological justice'. If! 'And finally,' she says, in a parting shot that might also help to ground, and bring grounding to, Duchrow's flighty beast of capitalism, this incarnate relational embodiment 'would contribute to challenging and, ultimately, transforming the fetishism of money and technology'.

In brief, the first part of this compendious book looks at working with others in multidisciplinary collaboration. The second part is on the appreciative inquiry of finding common ground in working with others. The third part looks at working with and against others from within, the internal problems of our own traditions. The fourth and fifth parts are on God's work, identity and character in Christian story, and the sixth and seventh parts are on praxis. All are threaded through with both well-known and emergent names, and with a preferential bias to issues of class, gender, race, religious diversity and nature itself. Once again, I would have liked to have seen more on spiritual and mystical experience, cultivating shoots at the interfaces of theology and transpersonal psychology. I would also have welcomed more on spiritual practices such as contemplative prayer, visioning, dreamwork, the holding of spaces that are hospitable to the soul and a range of discernment practices that offer much to practical theology. A downside of this book is its £140 price tag for the hardback, and only £14 off for the e-book. But the upside is that here we have a reference work to stand the test of time, a landmark from the present that is gifted to the future.

I have used the more formal and abstract Bergmann volume as a springboard for the T. and T. Clark handbook. Let this not be an opposition, but in witness to a trajectory. Bergmann and his colleagues serve as stepping stones from where theology was, before ecotheology, to where it is moving to now, an ecotheology of liberation. As such, Heimbrock and Persch's festschrift is a welcome and revealing tribute to a pathfinder of our times. The Holy Spirit of Bergmann's pneumatology is that mighty river, running on and on. And as the T. and T. Clark handbook reveals, it ever yet renews its living streams.

University of Glasgow Alastair McIntosh

Alastair I. McIntosh

Riders on the Storm: The Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being

Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2020. Pp. xii, 243. Pb. £9.99.

ISBN 978-1-78027-639-7

Since the publication of *Soil and Soul* by Aurum Press in 2001, Alastair McIntosh has established himself as the leading voice in the UK of what he calls 'spiritual activism'. His forte is bringing together social, political and scientific analysis with engaging narratives rooted in his Hebridean upbringing, and other life experiences. This book is framed by the visit of a group of islanders from Papua Province in Indonesian New Guinea, where McIntosh spent four years as a Voluntary Service Overseas worker, to Lewis, where he was raised. Communities in both places, he seeks to show, offer us clues to responding to the threat of climate chaos.

The book begins with four chapters looking at climate science. McIntosh insists that the only way forward, for the vast mass of us who are not experts, is to follow peer-reviewed science, as summarised in the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. These reports steer a *via media* between denial (the theme of the fifth chapter) and alarmism (the theme of the sixth) and McIntosh wishes to follow them. The sixth chapter comprises a sympathetic but critical evaluation of Extinction Rebellion's aims and methods. To date I know of no other book which does this. The remainder of the book is, as it were, McIntosh's pitch both to members of Extinction Rebellion, and also to those who are tempted either by denial or by apathy. As a Quaker, he seeks to see the good in all people, and not to name and shame. So he finds a place for private enterprise alongside the public sector (in establishing a green new deal).

McIntosh describes himself at one point as an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary, on the grounds that you don't leave the ship until the lifeboat is in the sea. In fact what he is proposing is (using the words of an African American activist) 'a spiritual understanding of revolution' (185). This begins with the spirituality of non-violence (which means that non-violence can never be a tactic), and the truth which is grounded in prayer and compassion. Only this, he believes, can address the consumerism which (along with population, and much more rootedly) is driving climate change. At the practical level, 'Big solutions don't work. It's the little things that make the difference' (189). The deep learning that is called for, he argues, includes collaborative leadership, community building (which he movingly describes in both Papua and Lewis),

and skills in negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution. Qualities of presence and inner grounding – Tao, dharma, 'the way, the truth and the life' – can awaken the gentleness and visionary motivation that we need.

There is so much here that resonates with being church. What are we about if not a spiritual revolution, not being conformed to this world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds (cf. Romans 12.2)? The book speaks to every Christian congregation, and not just to Extinction Rebellion groups. Yes, there are almost infinite calls on our attention and time, but McIntosh takes us close to the very heart of Christian and ecclesial calling.

University of Exeter Tim Gorringe

Timothy J. Gorringe

The World Made Otherwise: Sustaining Humanity in a Threatened World

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. Pp. x, 374. Pb. £35.

ISBN 978-1-5326-4867-0

Climate change, environmental degradation and pollution have taken us beyond the sustainable boundaries of the planet. Humanity is now facing a 'code red'. *The World Made Otherwise* poses two questions: how can we avoid runaway climate change? And how will humanity survive if we fail to act in time? Tim Gorringe argues that the problems caused by crossing planetary boundaries are primarily moral and political. We need to choose a different economic and political system, based on values – between 'a way of life and a way of death' (cf. Deuteronomy 30.19).

Gorringe's analysis of the current system and the values that undergird it is stark. The neoliberal capitalist system is based on individualism and the dream of non-stop growth. Trade between nations is based on competition, ignoring that they start from grossly inequal positions. Gorringe critiques the obsession with gross domestic product, which ignores externalities such as loss of biodiversity, pollution, climate change and human health. Capitalism is upheld by values of individual satisfaction and 'freedom'. Greed has been turned into a virtue. Justice is nowhere to be seen.

Gorringe unpacks the values of a different world – the values of a 'revolutionary humanism' (113) – based on hope rather than on fear. Instead of exalting private ownership, we need to protect the commons. The resources of

the earth belong to all people – an economy of grace. We need to strive for abundant life for all – 'good living' – human co-existence within a healthy web of life, rather than the 'American dream' of endless growth and consumption. We must move away from competition towards co-operation which will help us to develop local economies, localise food systems and create social movements for change (312). We must feed our growing population by agricultural methods which restore the land, rather than industrial farming which is focused on profit, destroying soil and polluting water.

Are such proposals for an alternative economy utopian? Gorringe gives examples of where they are already being lived out. In the 'transition' movement, 'bio-regions' have been identified where food is grown sustainably, and we can begin to think, instead of nations, of a community of communities, or small federated political units (235). Transition towns create viable neighbourhoods where people share and barter in alternative economy systems. Even land ownership can be held by community capital trusts (210). Around the world, there is a shift away from industrial agriculture. What Gorringe terms 'enlightened agriculture' (291) is based on the science of ecology and biology rather than that of industrial chemistry. These methods build healthy ecosystems that improve soil fertility and water retention, which are vital for adaptation to climate change. Throughout history, social movements such as civil rights, the abolition of slavery and women's suffrage have lived out alternative values. They did not take over political power, but affected change by living out values, so that that which seemed impossible became possible.

Gorringe's analysis of the economic system and industrial farming are well worth looking at in depth. Surprisingly, in the discussion of social movements, no mention or analysis is made of youth-led movements such as 'Fridays for Future' or the divestment movement which began with students. The book ends with a disappointing dystopian vision: what if we fail to avert the worst effects of the transgression of planetary boundaries? The only thing remaining will be to build arks of hope (243), which begs the question of who will be left to drown.

Since Gorringe wrote this book, the future appears even more bleak, as temperatures continue to rise and tipping points are reached. But we are also in a much more hopeful position, for Trump has gone, and we now produce more electricity from clean energy than from coal. Global emissions will start to drop this decade. The change is not yet enough – we need profound changes in our economies and ways of life – but at least the Titanic has seen the iceberg and is now turning.

The Christian vision is to be part of the great movement to 'renew the face of the Earth', not to create arks in preparation for the coming disaster.

As Gorringe reminds us, the Church was a social movement for its first two centuries, and we can become one again, 'living out the values around which social life is organised and the institutions of society are transformed' (312). Instead of raising up new sails, we are being called to change the wind.

Cape Town, South Africa Rachel Mash

Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, eds.

Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020. Pp. xx, 228. Pb. $24.99.

ISBN 978-0-8028-7441-2

Over the last two decades, theological engagement with creation has picked up speed and coalesced around the term 'ecotheology', the parameters of which remain stubbornly hard to pin down. In *Ecotheology*, editors Kiara Jorgenson and Alan Padgett host four distinct voices for a roundtable conversation about the field's emerging concerns and what its future might be. The book explores four commonly referenced models of ecotheology as defined by Jorgenson and Padgett: stewardship interpretations of scripture, social justice, virtue ethics, and deep incarnation/sacramental readings of creation. Accordingly, the voices that they host represent academic interests which pertain to these approaches, with each offering a chapter exploring a model – Anglican biblical scholar Richard Bauckham, Christian ethicists Steven Bouma-Prediger and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (evangelical-Reformed and Lutheran traditions respectively) and Catholic systematic theologian John Haught. Each chapter is followed by responses from the other contributors, a structure which at its best beautifully models the potential of interdisciplinary and ecumenical dialogue within theology in a time of climate and ecological breakdown.

Beyond its denominational and academic diversity, the book is consciously situated within the minority world. It has an 'intended American audience' and contributors who 'hail from highly consumptive contexts' so that it might be an exercise in attending 'to our own' (10). Jorgenson and Padgett, with respective academic interests in Protestant ecotheologies and dialogue between science and theology, frame the conversation with an introduction and conclusion, summarising the motivations behind the project and their impressions of the conversation created. Renowned climate scientist and communicator