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# Review: 'Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm'

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World theologians), Reynolds and O'Hara Graff (on sin), and Clifford (on ecofeminism). To call these "summary and review" articles is by no means a denigration, since the thematization of key threads in a discussion is of undeniable worth. The articles which tend to move into more constructive territory include the two by O'Hara Graff (on "women's experience" and feminist psychology), the "mujerista anthropology" of Isasi-Díaz, Ross on sexuality, Hilkert on God's image, and Phan on eschatology. All of the articles involve thorough research and provide excellent references. The book could easily be used as a text for graduate theology classes, is a must for theological libraries, and would be an excellent resource to have on one's own shelf.

There is a tragic and ironic twist to the personal side of this book. It is dedicated to Patricia Wismer, one of the contributors, who, due to her untimely death, is unable to see the fruits of her labor. Sadly, the editor herself died of cancer within months of the publication of this book. Peter Phan's article cites the lack of attention of feminists to eschatology in general and to the fate of individuals after death in particular. Perhaps as this generation of feminists meets death head on these questions will, regrettably, become theological issues arising very concretely from "women's experience."

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CYNTHIA CRYSDALE

*Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm.* By Leonardo Boff. Translated by John Cumming. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995. xii + 187 pages. \$14.95 (paper).

*With Roots and Wings: Christianity in an Age of Ecology and Dialogue.* By Jay B. McDaniel. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995. viii + 243 pages. \$16.99 (paper).

*Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology.* Edited by Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995. x + 397 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

Brazilian Leonardo Boff is best known as a liberation theologian. In this book, consisting of three sections and two sermons that function as prologue and epilogue, Boff introduces a new paradigm—ecology—that informs how liberation theology can be done.

In the preface, Boff notes that the reflections in this book "are the fruit of crisis." Written within months of the closing of the 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil, the book is Boff's attempt to redefine the theological enterprise in terms of an ecological framework. His methodology is simple and effective: he uses the ecological paradigm as the model for doing theology. In the beginning of the book he notes, "Ecology has to do with the relations, interaction, and dialogue of all living creatures (whether alive or not) among themselves and with all that exists. . . . Nothing exists outside of relationships" (7). Boff then uses that model to reflect on human social institutions, "Society is not a thing, but a network of relationships among persons, their functions, their belongings, and their institutions" (81). Drawing particularly on the new cosmology and his experience in the Franciscan tradition, his primary interest in this book is in the "network" of relationships, the interrelatedness of everything.

Because relationships are usually defined by power this theme opens the way to discuss the political, economic, and religious dimensions of an ecological paradigm in which theology is liberation and relationships transform. After leveling strong critiques at capitalism, democracy, environmentalists, conversationists, and religion Boff offers his "response" to a weary world, "sick within" (32). It is transformation to and participation in an ecological and theologically liberated life rooted in an earthly spirituality and a mysticism that draws on the mystery of God present in creation. Such a spirituality does not start from power but, from communion and mysticism, embraces the totality of things "replete with value" (36).

The book is not without problems, many of which are structural. The title betrays a central problem: is the book about ecology, liberation, or both? In fact, the book is more about theology than ecology. The new ecological paradigm is clear at the beginning, and Boff's clarity and insight carry the reader through a dazzling array of topics, each interesting but few carefully tied to the paradigm. Most disappointing is the lack of a clear synthesis at the end. Nevertheless, because it is clearly written and offers a voice the north desperately needs to hear, I would recommend this book for undergraduate classes studying contemporary theologies and for courses on ecology and religion.

Jay McDaniel's book continues to develop many of the general themes first discussed in "Earth, Sky, Gods and Mortals" (Twenty-Third, 1990), but this one is directed specifically to Christians struggling to find and develop an ecological spirituality and praxis. It is divided into two parts, "Roots in the Earth" and "Adventures in Dialogue," demonstrating McDaniel's interest in an ecological spirituality that is both Christian and in a continued dialogue with other religious traditions.

McDaniel's thesis is that Christianity is, or can be, an organism with the roots and wings of his title. The more centered we are in God, the more connected we will be to a "very good" creation. The author links the themes of cross and earth by reinterpreting both as "two sides of a grace-filled life, two sides of that wholeness into which each of us, as two-legged creatures on planet Earth, is called by Holy Wisdom." He then provides a "new reading" of the Genesis myths that, as he sees it, allows the Christian community to read them with the New Story of ecology. Lastly, he turns to other religions: Judaism, Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, and various Native American traditions, because his aim in this book has been to help us become more generous in our attitudes toward the earth and people who are different from us.

McDaniel's passions are evident: ecology, Christianity, and learning from other religious traditions. He treats each with reverence and the hand of the poet, and it is a joy to read his prose. However, that approach will not produce a convincing argument for his critics. Some in the academic community, including myself, will critique his Genesis rereading as simplistic, some in the Christian community will not recognize his Christianity as their own, and others will be particularly challenged by his emphasis on dialogue with other traditions. This book functions best if seen as a part of an agenda for discussion, reflection, and research. It is McDaniel's hope that individuals and com-

munities will at least attempt this agenda. This book would be appropriate for undergraduate classes, as well as for use in parish adult education groups.

For those who teach courses on ecology and religion, or those interested in introducing the topic into theology courses, Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre have provided an excellent resource. This anthology of essays (all previously published with the exception of their own essays placed at the end of the volume) attempts "to chronicle historical developments in this century of our current realization of the integral relationship of ecology to theology" (x). Arranged in three parts—Early Voices, Further Conversation, Post-modern Horizons—the editors provide classic articles and excerpts from seminal voices. The table of contents is a "who's who" in the field and this reviewer understands how difficult it was to choose just twenty-eight articles.

The selections provide a mix that includes readings in ecology, ecofeminism, and ecotheology. Ecology in general and ecofeminism in particular have been criticized as exercises of the elite, i.e., of those in affluent countries of the West. Some of the authors included here are also activists in their own right, but almost all are primarily academics. Including the work of more activists along with that of academics would invite the reader to see the partnership of thought and praxis. While several authors provide the global dimension of their work, more voices from beyond North America would enrich an already rich collection. The reader would also be helped by the inclusion of an appendix that provides a short biographical sketch for each author, as well as a brief introduction to each division of the book.

This book is useful for undergraduate and graduate courses in ecology and religion, theology, women and religion, as well as for those interested in exploring the relationship of ecology and theology. It is definitely recommended for the college library.

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PAMELA THIMMES

*God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis.* By Geiko Müller-Fahrenheit. New York: Continuum, 1995. xiv + 176 pages. \$19.95.

I wish I could offer an enthusiastic recommendation for this book. Its author's heart is in the right place and he wants to contribute to the churches' ability to save a threatened world. Unfortunately, it seems that a mistaken editorial decision has rendered the work inadequate to the task.

Müller-Fahrenheit brings a wide range of experience to the writing: service at the World Council of Churches in Switzerland, religious education work in Germany, and teaching theology in Costa Rica. He writes from a heightened awareness of the multiple challenges and crises we face; indeed, the original subtitle of the book is *Our Faith in God's Spirit in This Threatened Time*. He is conscious of the deep connections between the cosmic, personal, and social dimensions of these crises. He is convinced that Christian convictions can inspire, motivate, and guide Christian communities in meeting the challenges.

His pneumatological essay unfolds in three parts: Creator Spirit—Soul of the World, where the Holy Spirit is seen as the core of the powerful, creative