

Book Reviews

***God is Green*, Ian Bradley, London UK: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990**

The author looks at the claim that Christianity has asserted the importance of human beings in a way that devalues all other creatures, and has contributed to the view of nature as a machine, from which God had withdrawn. In reply, he points to the way that the Bible insists that God is the creator of the whole universe, and not just of humanity. He quotes, not just from the Bible, but also from Christian saints and poets, who have spoken of their love of all God's creatures. He insists that, not only the doctrine of creation, but also the doctrine of the incarnation, rebut any dualist understanding of nature, that sees it as cut off from God, merely material, and therefore worthless.

He takes a sacramental view that sees God as dynamically involved in what we call "the sense of creation", and quotes the Bible, and St Francis, to support his view that the force that both drives and holds the world in harmony is the love of God. He also appeals to the way, in which evolutionary theory, and quantum physics, have led some scientists to a deep sense of wonder at the mystery of the immense, ordered energy, they find at the heart of creation.

When confronted by the claim that an exaggerated doctrine of the fall of man has led to the view that not only humanity, but also nature, is totally depraved, he argues that the brokenness of nature can be interpreted as an opportunity for healing and growth. Much of the imperfection of nature he sees as immaturity, rather than as corruption. He claims that a forward-looking, evolutionary approach to nature can be found in the Bible, above all, in the key text of Rom 8:18-23. He does not see this movement as being self-contained, self-sufficient, and independent of salvation, and fulfilment, by Jesus Christ. Instead, he sees that the evolutionary development of creation is made possible by, and is summed up in, the "cosmic Christ", who is the Saviour of the whole of creation.

He feels that Christians are called to respond to God's involvement in creation, by being stewards of creation, as gardeners, scientists, poets, artists, and priests. He says human beings are like priests, because they mediate between God and nature, and he quotes the biologist and priest, Arthur Peacocks, "Man's role may be conceived as that of a priest of creation, as a result of whose activity, the sacrament of creation is revered; and who, because he, alone, is conscious of God Himself and nature, can mediate

between insentient nature and God – for a priest is characterised by activity directed towards God, on behalf of others.”

In order to put such ideas into practice in worship and action, he suggests that special services, including hymns and prayers in praise of God’s creation could be included. He says the church could take a lead in community projects, such as recycling, and land conservation, and says churches should use land in their possession in an environmentally-responsible way. The whole of his book is a statement of the intrinsic value of every creature, and so is an encouragement to the church, to take political and economic action, to uphold that value.