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## Book Review

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Celia Deane-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann, and Marcus Vogt (eds.), *Religion in the Anthropocene* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), xxiii + 338 pp., \$42 (pbk), ISBN: 9781498291910.

The motivating premise of *Religion in the Anthropocene*, which is comprised of papers from the 2015 European Forum for the Study of Religion and Ecology, is that the Anthropocene, as a term and as a geological epoch, has received insufficient attention within the environmental humanities, and especially in religious studies and theology (p. 1). Given that the Anthropocene has come to saturate these fields in recent years, this is a difficult premise to sustain. The question of the Anthropocene, in fact, is ubiquitous across the humanities, and increasingly so in religious studies and theology. Many scholars, myself included, interpret the Anthropocene as a profound cultural phenomenon as well as a debate in the geological sciences, an idea, discourse, and reality that provokes complex philosophical, moral, political, and theological questions. Thus, the fact that this book engages these issues as well is not unique. Rather, the distinctive contribution of this book is that it collects such a diversity of religiously themed interdisciplinary reflections upon, and interventions into, various debates provoked by the Anthropocene. The book is divided into six parts: 'Setting the Stage', 'Historical Matters', 'Philosophical Analyses', 'Theological Trajectories', 'Ethical Deliberations', and 'Sociopolitical Transformations'. Each part contains multiple essays, several of which I will briefly summarize before offering thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the whole book.

In Part 1, 'Setting the Stage', Michael Northcott's essay articulates the reversal that motivates much of the cultural work on the Anthropocene: 'If the radical Copernican turn decentered humanity in the destiny of the earth, now through science and technology humans are again becoming aware that they are central to the earthly networks of agency and being which stretch from the rocky substrata to the skies' (p. 29). He argues that the dualisms that shape the discourse of the Anthropocene are aspects of a theological 'break between earth and heaven that the Copernican revolution originally entailed' (p. 31). Northcott's chapter exemplifies the powerful hermeneutic insights of a theo-ethical interpretation of the Anthropocene and demonstrates the contributions Christian theology and the Christian church can make to the moral and political dimensions of the Anthropocene. Part 1 concludes with a chapter by Sigurd Bergmann that works with the conceit of repainting nature to present eight different ways of viewing religion in the Anthropocene. This is a comprehensive and very useful account of the various ways religious views and values shape our interactions with nature, but it is not entirely clear what is new in this essay and what is a summary of Bergman's past writing.

In Part 2, 'Historical Matters', Franz Mauelshagen examines how the Anthropocene illuminates the weaknesses of, and compels us to work creatively across, what C.P. Snow referred to as the 'two cultures' of scientific and humanistic inquiry. To his credit, Mauelshagen's chapter is one of the only chapters that substantively engages the colonial and global justice aspects of the Anthropocene.

In Part 3, 'Philosophical Analyses', ethicist Maria Antonaccio contributes an insightful and well-needed meta-ethical intervention into the dueling moral framings of the Anthropocene—the 'good Anthropocene', which valorizes the melioristic powers of human engineering, and the 'bad Anthropocene', which argues for the need to humbly mitigate those very same powers since they are, arguably, what got us into this planetary predicament. She argues that the dueling frames for the Anthropocene should be 'demoralized' since they both tend to conflate normative and descriptive discourses. She advocates 'remoralizing' the Anthropocene by showing how it provokes quasi-theological questions about the sources of normativity as such.

In Part 4, 'Theological Trajectories', Celia Deane-Drummond argues that we should interpret the Anthropocene by way of deep history (human evolution) rather than big history (cosmic evolution). She makes a case that the moral stories best suited to the Anthropocene should have local geographic and cultural resonance: 'Stories that are helpful', she argues, 'are locally-textured, dramatic ones that make the perception of grander, cosmological-scale dramas far more manageable because they allow human beings to imagine themselves as agents in those stories' (p. 177). Petra Steinmair-Pösel's compelling chapter interprets the juggernaut of consumer capitalism by way of René Girard's prophetic work on mimetic desire. Concluding this group of essays, Marisa Ronan's chapter presents a fascinating analysis of correlations between the apocalyptic fiction popular among American evangelicals and the politics and institutions of American climate denialism.

Part 5, 'Ethical Deliberations', includes a chapter by Markus Vogt, making a case for the Catholic social ethical paradigm of human ecology as a framework for environmental ethics in the Anthropocene. He argues persuasively for human ecology as a transdisciplinary research program that can integrate insights from the social and natural sciences, work across societal and ecological foci, and shape pedagogical and policy proposals.

The book ends with two strong chapters in Part 6, 'Sociopolitical Transformations'. Ian Barns argues for the necessity of grounding practical socio-technical adaptations and political and economic transformations in a moral narrative that constrains human power. He makes the case specifically for the moral power and political logic of Eucharistic community. David Joseph Wellman brings the volume to a close with a highly illuminating discussion of an emerging ecological realist approach to international relations that 'rejects the anthropocentric assumption of classical realism, which holds that nearly all power worthy of the name is designed, controlled, and propagated by human beings' (p. 287). In place of this assumption, ecological realism 'holds that the power of the biosphere is in many ways greater than the power any group of humans could conceive or generate' (p. 287).

As this brief overview indicates, this book takes up a diverse array of topics, themes, debates, and questions. Some of the authors (including Antonaccio, Bergmann, Deane-Drummond, Northcott, and Szerszynski) have written extensively on their topics in the past and are relatively well-known in the literature on religion and Anthropocene. Aside from Antonaccio, their contributions in this book seem to

summarize their past work rather than advancing new ideas. Nonetheless, these chapters offer valuable introductory leads to students and scholars new to work on religion and the Anthropocene. Most of the other contributors in this volume seem to be developing new work and their chapters will be valuable to students and scholars who have done more research looking for new lines of inquiry.

This book reflects the challenges of turning a collection of interdisciplinary and topically diverse conference papers into a coherent book. Although the headings for the six parts are meant to provide an organizational structure, and they rightly identify important dimensions of scholarly work on religion and the Anthropocene, the distribution of the chapters under those headings is distractingly arbitrary. For example, in Part 1, only Bergman's essay, which provides a multidimensional rubric for interpreting the various modes and functions of religion in the Anthropocene, is sufficiently comprehensive and programmatic to set the stage for the rest of the book. Northcott's essay is very insightful, and Baumgartner's is solid, but they would both seem to fit better in Part 4, 'Theological Trajectories'. Szerszynski's essay, which is among the more innovative in the whole volume, and the only one that explicitly deals with traditions other than Christianity, could just as well have been placed in Part 2, 'Historical Matters'. As for the chapters in 'Historical Matters', although Mauelshagen and Fuentes both deal with historical questions, the breadth of the issues they take up, and the fundamental nature questions they engage, would have done a better job of 'Setting the Stage' than some of the other chapters included in Part 1. And given Antonaccio's sustained focus on normative and metaethical questions, it is surprising that her chapter is not included in Part 5, 'Ethical Deliberations'.

These are structural rather than substantive weaknesses. For this reader, however, the headings and groupings seemed to impose an order that really was not there. In addition to this structural weakness, the book promises to be about religion in the Anthropocene but is almost exclusively about the Anthropocene and the Christian West. And aside from Marisa Ronan's essay, few if any of the other authors take up in any extensive way the negative contributions of religion and Christianity to the predicaments of the Anthropocene. Finally, the myriad questions about justice in the Anthropocene are barely addressed in the book. Any book that promises to engage the topic of religion in the Anthropocene, and yet fails to give significant attention to the role of the religions in relation to the problems of justice in the Anthropocene, is very incomplete. When considered as-a-whole and against the promise in the title, this book is structurally challenged and substantively incomplete, but it will serve as a resource of references for scholars new to this area of inquiry and present some new lines of inquiry for scholars with more familiarity with the topics.

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