
Book Review

Sigurd Bergmann (ed.), *Eschatology as Imagining the End: Faith Between Hope and Despair* (Routledge: New York, 2018), ix + 188 pp., \$99.95 (cloth), ISBN: 978-1138481367.

This collection of essays developed from a sustained working relationship among a group of scholars working in the Nordic Forum for Contextual Theology. The authors have benefitted from five workshops between 2011 and 2017, and their essays generally bear the traces of close collaboration.

Readers of this journal will be particularly interested in several of the essays that focus on issues involved with climate change and environmental degradation. As Marion Grau puts it, 'theologians working with Christian traditions are challenged to consider what kind of eschaton and what kinds of revelations this period many call the Anthropocene presents us with' (p. 45). The introduction, Grau's chapter, and the author's own contribution strive to develop a Christian theological interpretive frame that makes sense of the human damage done to the environment. Other essays range farther afield, considering issues such as terrorism, euthanasia, works of art as providing a source of resistance to the evils of the world, and the Syrian refugee crisis.

The authors draw particularly on the resources of Nordic, Lutheran traditions, but they also range widely into other scholarship and into analysis of art, poetry, and music. As a set, the essays spend more time on constructing an interpretive frame for understanding the reciprocal relations between Christian eschatological ideas and various issues than they do in detailed analysis of the issues themselves. In some essays (see Kurtén, Bergmann, Bråkenhielm) references to concrete issues like climate change are muted.

Nonetheless, the book is studded with some productive observations. Bergmann, for example, argues that eschatology, the study of last things, matters as a topic, despite what another author identifies as its persistent neglect in recent Nordic theology, because it constitutes 'a reflection about our common future on Earth, our common home, in light of our common history and past' (p. 14). In fact, the focus on making a home in a space that humans themselves have made inhospitable is a theme that runs through several of the essays. Grau, for example, characterizes religion itself as 'an essentially spatial phenomena' that gives individuals and communities the skills necessary for making themselves a home in the cosmos (p. 49). Bergmann describes the loss of a spatial connection to the world as having given rise to a number of significant contemporary social movements, including what he terms 'ecological spirituality' (p. 96).

Of all the essays, Grau's is probably the most provocative. Building on her research of Arctic Petroleum economies, climate change, and the theological questions that they raise, she proposes that 'theology needs new ways of telling stories—stories of

the powers which humanity exerts over the earth and how that will change ideas of God and divine agency' (p. 47). Although this group of essays ranges over a wide variety of topics, it still offers those interested in contemporary theologies of nature some rich resources with which to think.

*Eugene V. Gallagher
Department of Religious Studies
Connecticut College
evgal@conncoll.edu*