

Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation, edited by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz. Prefatory Letter from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Foreword by Bill McKibben. Fordham University Press, 2013. 508pp., hb., \$125.00, ISBN-13: 9780823251445; pb., \$35.00, ISBN-13: 9780823251452.

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Central to the work and ministry of Patriarch Bartholomew has been environmental care. He began this work in the mid-1980s and pulled it forward as a central focus of Orthodox Christian thought when he became Patriarch in 1991. Environmentalism has become, as Bill McKibben writes in his Foreword, “a spiritual responsibility” for Christians and all human beings through the work of the “Green Patriarch.”

This large volume in the Fordham University Press series on “Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought” brings together many of the finest Orthodox thinkers, from McGuckin and Louth to Sherrard, Theokritoff, Yannaras and Zisioulas of Pergamon and many others. It is organized in four sections. A suite of essays explore the notion of “knowledge united to God” in Patristic thought and how this has shaped the foundations of the theology of the Christian East, affirming the life of the world as sacramental. The second section explores the many and varied ways twentieth-century theologians understand ecology and the vocation of human beings as the priests of Creation whose work is to bless, heal and care for the world, a world we are not separate from but intimately rooted in. In Orthodox thought there is no salvation separate from the salvation of the world, a distinctive feature of the Christian East compared to its Latin sister. Section three highlights a set of historical, theological and philosophical ideas clarifying some of the missteps in parts of the environmental movement and pointing to a renewal of a sacred cosmology.

The final set of essays draw together insights from Orthodox spiritual life that move the reader onto hopeful ground. So much of the scholarship on religion and environmental concerns and the work of activists in this area is often pessimistic. It is one of the gifts both to the Green Patriarch and of many Orthodox thinkers that, while being anything but sentimental or nostalgic, they are also not given to pessimism. Their spiritual disciplines and theological anchors give them such a large sense of the wonder and glory of

the cosmos and a modest but sustained belief that human beings are capable the kind of the kind of *askesis* which puts an end to avaricious appetite and restores the life of the world to all its glorious limits. We don't have to be miners. We can be gardeners.

The Appendices to the volume include a Vesper liturgy commissioned by the Patriarch for all Orthodox Churches to be prayer in the evening of the first day of the Christian year, September 1. It is his hope that the prayer of the church may cultivate a deeper regard for our fragile world. A superb bibliography is included along with a glossary of specialized theological terms.