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Emma Mason *Christina Rossetti: Poetry, Ecology, Faith*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Pp. xvi + 212. £30.00 (HBk). ISBN 9780198723691.

For those interested in the study of theology, the revival in recent years of matters religious in the study of English literature has been a highly positive development. Emma Mason has been at the forefront of this revival in relation to Victorian writing in particular, and in this very welcome study she offers a clear and full account of the theological and environmental concerns of the great nineteenth-century poet Christina Rossetti. With a thorough grounding both in Rossetti's own writings, and in the diverse theological sources which underpin them, Mason shows clearly how central to Rossetti's life and thought is the connection between the doctrines of creation and incarnation, and the love of and care for the natural world which features so prominently in her work.

Setting out her task in an erudite but engaging introduction, Mason suggests something of a gap in the market for readers of Rossetti, who have been slow to recognize the essential link between theology and ecology in her work. The first chapter ('What is Catholic is Christian') then immerses us in the diverse elements of Tractarian theology with which Rossetti was so familiar. The range of sources is important here: Mason shows that the poet was indebted to the theological writings of significant Tractarian thinkers, but also brings to the fore the auditory experience of the sermon in the formation of the Victorian Christian mind. In Rossetti's case, attention is drawn to the preaching of William Dodsworth, a less familiar name to students of theology than the great Tractarian leaders Newman, Keble, and Pusey, but a major figure in the dissemination of Oxford Movement ideas among the parochial congregations of well-to-do north London. Similarly, the importance of Isaac Williams's tracts on the principle of 'reserve' is highlighted, a theme which will chime with those familiar with Newman's writing both earlier (on the Arians) and later (on the Development of Doctrine). 'The Tractarians privileged poetry as the form most suited to reveal the unseen' (48), and while Keble's *The Christian Year* was among the most popular books of poetry in the nineteenth century, it is in the genius of Rossetti that that privilege has endured more than in any other Anglican poet.

More familiar to many will be the association between Rossetti's name and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The second chapter examines that movement's influence and influences, reminding us that 'the significance of Catholicism and Tractarianism for Pre-Raphaelitism was conspicuous' (75). Through her familiarity with patristic trinitarian theologies, and the writings of Gregory of Nyssa specifically, Rossetti was able to ground a high doctrine of the natural world in a trinitarian understanding of a God whose life was an act of self-giving (or kenotic, self-

emptying) love. The importance of plant life and the imagery of nature in her poetry are understood through the 'kinness of nature' (92), which connects all created things through the outworking of divine grace. These themes are drawn out in the biblically imaginative reading of Rossetti's narrative masterpiece 'Goblin Market' (which might provide a good way in for those less than familiar with her poetic output).

The 'Companionable Faith' which is the subject of the third chapter develops the connectedness of Christianity, creation, and artistic expression through considering (a biblical verb important to Rossetti) the treatment of both flora and fauna in her writings. Her rejection of 'the notion of an atomized world made of individuals' (113) pushes significantly against a simplistic early Romantic reading of her attitude to nature, and the links with theological art and architecture – in, for example, the creative visual excesses of William Butterfield – come clearly through her devotional writings as well as her poetry. The eschatological culmination of these ideas in the final chapter draws together the book's preceding themes. 'Rossetti thus greens grace by identifying it as the dynamism by which all things are moved into interconnection with God and in which the old creation becomes the new' (160). Rossetti's favourite theological resources remain central as we see how close readings of Revelation, and Dodsworth's sermons on the subject, combine with Cappadocian thought, with the Communion of Saints, and with the idea of kenosis, to show how the incarnational transformation of the material foreshadows the goal towards which the natural world is creatively oriented. The divine victory enacted in the last things is not a triumph of 'dogmatism and power' (191), but the self-emptying love and grace of the one who gives himself in creation and in incarnation.

The importance of this book is at least threefold. It provides an excellent survey and exposition of the incarnational and practical theology of Tractarianism as essential to understanding this great poet, and it does so in a manner which is both learned and lively, introducing the reader to the full context of Tractarian theological expression: not simply pamphlets, sermons, or erudite studies, but the practical work of Christian charity with which Rossetti was closely involved, and the material controversy concerning incarnation and worship which led to the ritualist disputes of the second half of the nineteenth century. It introduces readers, both those familiar with Rossetti's poetry and those yet to meet her, to her weighty contribution to ecological and environmental ideas, her eschatological materialism underlying a fiercely held view of the interconnectedness of nature, and her opposition to individualism as much as to dualism. And it achieves both these things while constantly connecting the two, demonstrating that Rossetti is not simply a theologically significant poet, or a poetically significant environmentalist, but that her view of nature is entirely grounded in an understanding of creation and incarnation which she found in a wide range of theological ideas and sources.

Surprisingly for an Oxford University Press book there are a few editorial infelicities – ‘credendi’ is the counterpart of ‘orandi’ in the formula which applies the rule of prayer to the rule of faith; ‘kenotic’, whilst derived from the Greek of the New Testament, is an English word with a short o, and needs no macron; the phrase ‘Anglicans as well as Anglo-Catholics’ (163) seems to assume the latter are not a subset of the former. But these small complaints are very much outweighed by the depth of scholarship, breadth of knowledge, and clarity of writing which constitute this splendid book.

Emma Mason is to be congratulated on achieving so much in a monograph of little over two hundred pages. This book will be of interest to anyone surveying the theology of Anglicanism, anyone interested in the interplay between poetry and theology in English, and anyone seeking to understand and promote the role of theological discussion in the pressing contemporary debate concerning environmental issues. In this context, Rossetti’s voice is justly heard as being of considerable importance. Few nineteenth-century theological figures address contemporary issues so directly or so beautifully.

PETER GROVES

Worcester College, University of Oxford
e-mail: peter.groves@theology.ox.ac.uk

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John-Mark L. Miravalle *God, Existence, and Fictional Objects: The Case for Meinongian Theism*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). Pp. 186.
£85.00 (Hbk). ISBN 9781350061613.

In *God, Existence, and Fictional Objects*, John-Mark L. Miravalle makes two claims that will strike many philosophers and theologians as initially implausible: (i) meinongianism – the view that there are non-existent objects – is the best theory of non-existence and (ii) meinongianism best accommodates the metaphysical implications of traditional theism. While theologians have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the nature of existence and philosophers, at least in the last century, have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the nature of non-existence, little reflection has taken place on the question of God and non-existence. *God, Existence, and Fictional Objects* seeks to fill this lacuna, offering a meinongian-theist merger that Miravalle hopes will clarify and render coherent traditional theistic claims and heighten the religious believer’s gratitude to God through a proper appreciation of the non-existence out of which all creatures emerge.