

Such an account is not an advance in the field of study in relation to the theme of universalism and eschatology within Christian theology. However, the precision and clarity (and accessibility) with which these arguments are made is of great worth, as is the presentation of different pieces of Christian tradition than are sometimes employed to make the case.

It is perhaps in relation to this point that there might be some questions to be asked by scholars who have engaged with this field in detail over the years. There is at times a sense of (at least in the contemporary setting) some of the arguments presented being made as something new. Perhaps in the way that some of the evidence is marshalled, that might be so. But there is little here in terms of the argument which has not been said in recent years by a range of scholars, including Ilaria Ramelli, Gregory Macdonald, Tom Talbot, Morwenna Ludlow and even the present writer. It is perhaps sad that, while there are passing references to George Macdonald, Barth, von Balthasar and Kierkegaard, so few contemporary voices appear at all, and there is little sense (if any) of situating the argument in light of current or even nineteenth- and twentieth-century discussions of the topic. Yes universalism is an area of study which has received a good deal of discussion, especially since Barth. Scholars from Fredric Farrar to Jürgen Moltmann have helpful things to say on these issues, and the current debate is perhaps in a place where it would have been helpful to see what is genuinely moving the discussion on.

However, to judge the book in this way is unjust. My sense in reading it is that this is a book for educated lay people as much for (indeed, perhaps more than) scholars working in the field. The examples and evidence deployed are helpfully arranged and convincing, and the lack of footnoting and the mastery of prose make this a very, very good read for anyone interested in universalism: it is a joy to engage with. Scholars who have dealt with the field will find great delight and affirmation here, while those who have not considered these matters will find no finer guide in terms of a coherent, well-structured and eloquent book.

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Jennifer R. Ayres, *Inhabitanace: Ecological Religious Education*

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This volume explores the concept of inhabitanace, its cultivation within churches (that is to say, in 'religious education' in the American use of the term) and related issues. It is a well-written and interesting monograph, which provides both a considerable scholarly discussion (including nearly 60 pages of notes and references) and many illuminating accounts of relevant practice.

'Inhabitanace' is an abstract noun coined from the verb to inhabit and the noun inhabitant, which are themselves used with reference to the natural home or habitat

of a person or other organism. In Ayres' persuasive definition, inhabitation is a matter of *living well* 'within the context and bounds of [one's] habitat' (as 'created and sustained, and loved by God'), 'by seeking to know and love a particular place in some detail and honoring its rhythms, limits, and possibilities', while at the same time embracing one's own vulnerability as a living creature (pp. 2–3, 5, 10, 49, 55).

The book begins with an exploration of this rich concept in terms of who human beings truly *are*, as embedded creatures who not only stand in awe of the natural world but also call it their home. Rather than a backward-looking focus on human sin (although human sinfulness is taken seriously), the author's theology embraces an eschatological doctrine of creation. She contends that what we need in these times of environmental anguish is much more than technological fixes: we need a personal and social reorientation of human life and identity, interpreted here as the *metanoia* and homecoming of a prodigal. This argument is followed by a reflection on the importance of ecological virtue and its accompanying affections for an ecological wisdom that goes beyond mere cleverness, and which includes what the ecologist E. O. Wilson called *biophilia* (love of life) and the desire and longing of *eros* as well as self-giving *agape*. A central place is also found for the vulnerability of finitude and death (which is 'real' and 'everywhere' in nature), for ecological sin and grief, and for hope and resilience (pp. 26–37).

Chapter 3 of the book is devoted to theoretical reflections on a pedagogy of inhabitation, in which Ayres endorses a model of *paideia*, 'moral formation for participation in a community', allied with an epistemology of holistic, relational, embodied, and imaginative knowing of – rather than a distanced 'knowing about' – nature and its problems (pp. 42, 46, 51–2, 58–60). This account is beautifully developed and cogently argued. Unlike many of its advocates, however, her emphasis on the educative power of formation and nurture is never one-sided. Critical reflection originating in 'a sharp mind' is also essential: 'having been formed as responsible members of a community, educated persons ... are obligated to critique structures, ideas, and practices that consciously or unconsciously harm members of that community'. Christians should not just be shaped, therefore, but also empowered 'to engage critically with the theological and moral traditions in which they are situated' (pp. 61–3, 156, n. 77, 163, n. 40).

Much of the rest of the book explores the design and outworking of pedagogical practices for inhabitation through a number of case studies. As these practices are (appropriately) heavily contextualised, some of this material may seem rather remote to British church life. Nevertheless, there is much to be learned from these examples of good practice in communities of formation that are also 'communities of love, accountability, and imagination – communities of hope', to which the vulnerable, unrooted, alienated prodigal may return and 'be woven back into the fabric of the place', and thus live again (pp. 128–30).

This, Ayres affirms, is 'the path of inhabitation'.

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