
Theodore David McCall
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The participation of the rest of creation in the transformation
This book began life as a PhD thesis, so I firstly record my thanks to my supervisors, Denis Edwards and Phillip Tolliday. Their patient attention to detail and constant encouragement helped me realise that it was indeed possible to finish. Sometimes, perhaps often, we underestimate the quality and dedication of our theologians in this country. To two fine academics, whose minds I admire and whose theology I enjoy, I say thank you.

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Theo McCall
St Peter’s College, Adelaide
Feast Day of the Birth of Mary, Mother of our Lord, 2010.
## Glossary

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aeon or Aevum</td>
<td>A description of time—not the absolute eternity of God himself—it is the relative eternity of the new creation, which participates in the absolute eternity of God.</td>
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<td>Anamnesis</td>
<td>Memory in the strongest possible sense of recalling past events and people so strongly that they become a part of present reality.</td>
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<td>Anthropocentric</td>
<td>Human centred, that is, looking at things from a human perspective and with a human focus.</td>
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<td>Apocalyptic</td>
<td>Literally ‘unveiling’ but normally refers to the end of the world, whether destructive or transformative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apophatic</td>
<td>The understanding of God is found in what we do not say: an acknowledgement of the limits of human language and knowledge of God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christology</td>
<td>Knowledge of Christ, but particularly the theology surrounding Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consummation</td>
<td>The transformation of everything into God’s new creation, preserving yet transforming.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cosmology</td>
<td>A view of the world, that is, the cosmos, whether ancient or current.</td>
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<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Creatio Continua</strong></td>
<td>God continues to create, whether through direct intervention or through the processes of the natural world (for example, evolution).</td>
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<td><strong>Creatio ex nihilo</strong></td>
<td>God created the world out of nothing. This doctrine was particularly important in the early church in countering the Gnostic ideas of creation from pre-existing matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diachronically</strong></td>
<td>At the same time, across time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dipolar</strong></td>
<td>Having two natures. Used particularly in this book as referring to God having two natures with respect to time: ‘eternal’ and ‘immanent’.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Docetism</strong></td>
<td>A heresy which viewed Jesus as divine but not human, or a spirit but not of the flesh.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Trinity</strong></td>
<td>The presence and activity of the Trinity within creation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ekklesia</strong></td>
<td>The body of the church, the community of faith.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entropy</strong></td>
<td>The running down of energy: available energy becomes increasingly random and disordered.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>The theory of knowledge, including its nature and scope.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eschatological moment</strong></td>
<td>The moment when God will gather all of time and space, the whole created order, and transform it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eschatology</strong></td>
<td>The ‘last things’, normally referring to heaven, hell, purgatory and judgement. However, also refers more generally to the eternal destiny of everything.</td>
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Glossary

**Eschaton**
The final transformation of everything into the new creation.

**Exegesis**
Interpretation of a text, that is, determining its meaning.

**Gaia**
A name given to the idea of the entire universe being inter-connected to the extent that it can be thought of as a whole: builds on ancient ideas of 'Mother Nature'.

**Gnosticism**
Heresy which views the material world as imperfect and knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*) as the ultimate form of perfection. The world is understood as being created from (imperfect) pre-existent material.

**Immanent**
God’s presence in creation, usually in contrast to his transcendence.

**Immanent Trinity**
The inner, divine life of the Trinity: the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit within the God-head.

**Kenosis**
Self-emptying, referring to God’s self-restriction in allowing creation to come into being or Christ’s self-restriction of his divine powers in becoming human.

**Material Inscription**
A process in which the history of the cosmos, that is, the history of everything, is thought of being inscribed in the eschaton.

**Millenarianism**
Similar to 'apocalypticism', namely the end of the world in a very literal, physical sense.

**Neo-Platonism**
A philosophical world-view in which the world is viewed as imperfect, with ultimate salvation
coming from the salvation of the soul, as opposed to the body.

**Omnipresence**  
God’s presence everywhere.

**Ontology**  
The essence of something: the nature of its ‘being’.

**Orthopraxis**  
Right action: practical action which is ‘correct’ or ‘orthodox’.

**Panentheistic**  
God’s presence in creation and yet transcendence of it. God is both transcendent and immanent.

**Parousia**  
The second coming of Christ at the end of time.

**Perichoresis**  
Mutual indwelling. Two persons or beings dwell within each other mutually. They also participate in the attributes of the other.

**Pneumatology**  
Theology of the Holy Spirit.

**Praxis**  
Practical action.

**Primordial Moment**  
The moment of creation, when God chose to restrict himself, and from the restriction of eternity emerges ‘the time of creation’.

**Second law of thermodynamics**  
The conversion of energy to heat (to do some useful work) inevitably means a decrease in the quality of the energy.

**Shekinah**  
A Jewish concept of God, describing God’s presence with the people. The idea of the Shekinah included the sense of the Shekinah journeying with the people, and suffering with them.
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<tr>
<td>Soteriology</td>
<td>The theology of ‘being saved’ or ‘redemption’.</td>
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<td>Sublation</td>
<td>Literally means the turning of one thing (minor) into something larger. However, in Ulrich Körtner’s work it is a translation of the German ‘aufheben’ which means both to preserve and change. He uses the term solely with respect to apocalypticism to mean ‘the Christian understanding of existence neither merely negates the apocalyptic understanding of existence nor shares it wholly without contradiction’. In other words, it describes Christianity’s acceptance of apocalyptic thought, but acceptance which is shaped by the cross and resurrection of Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teleological</td>
<td>Having a forward movement towards a specific Goal (Greek: telos).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theodicy</td>
<td>The study of the question of the presence of evil in a world created by a God who is good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transcendence</td>
<td>God’s nature and being is above and beyond anything in creation.</td>
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Introduction

The world that we inhabit, and the vast cosmos in which we exist, is incredibly beautiful and intricate. The advances of modern physics, including the latest telescopes and space exploration vehicles, have simply increased the sense of wonder which the ancient Jews wrote about in the psalms. The more I read about the delicate balance of the first moments of the cosmos, the more I marvel at the process which brought about the existence of the earth and the creatures that inhabit it. One of my joys in life is cycling. I live in the city of Adelaide, South Australia. It is a perfect city for cycling. When I first began this project, once or twice a week I would cycle in the early morning. The last part of the return trip would involve riding eastwards into the rising sun. On those occasions, as I felt the warmth of the sun on my face and was aware of its sheer power and energy, I was convinced, as I still am, that the universe is an overwhelmingly beautiful place, which God would never abandon or destroy. It is with this complete faith in God’s love for his creation that I set out to write an account of how this creation, with all its beauty and fragility, as well as its flaws and scars, might be transformed into God’s new creation. Given the ecological crisis that we face, how can we meaningfully talk about the consummation of all things, without removing the impetus for ecological action? In other words, is it possible to develop an ecological eschatology? This book will begin the steps of reconciling ecology with eschatology, building on the belief that both are necessary in any balanced theology.

1. Some notes on language: firstly, throughout the work I have attempted to avoid the use of gender-specific language for God as much as possible, except for reasons of style or clarity or when directly quoting other writers. Where I have made use of the masculine personal pronoun for God, it is simply for the sake of style in those particular sentences. Secondly, the British convention of spelling has been followed throughout, likewise except when directly quoting other writers who follow the American convention.
1. Intimately connected

One of the assumptions of this work is indeed that the world is not only precious and loved by God, but that our very existence as human beings is fundamentally connected with the emergence of the universe. This may seem self-evident, but the sad reality is that many Christians, including many Christian theologians, have come to believe in a kind of neo-Platonism, which sees our pre-existing souls returning to a kind of bodiless existence in ‘heaven’. Heaven in this context is defined rather imprecisely but may be understood as not being a part of the creation itself, which is transitional and contingent, but rather as an eternal paradise. In recent years this neo-Platonic approach has also been influenced by the New Age movement, which in turn has appropriated and modified the Hindu concept of re-incarnation. This work rejects these approaches, simply because the connection with our bodies and indeed the wider cosmos is a fundamental part of who we are as creatures and human beings.

A brief examination of current scientific thought, building on my experience and wonder of the rising sun, will show the connection between the cosmos and us. We are intimately and inextricably connected with the cosmos, at the deepest and most fundamental level. ‘The cosmos is a unity. To understand ourselves we must understand the stars. We are star-dust—he ashes from long-dead stars.’ What Martin Rees is pointing out here is that at the basic chemical level of our bodies we are connected with the rest of the cosmos. Indeed a galaxy represents a vast ecological system. Inside the stars pristine hydrogen is transmuted into what Rees terms the basic building blocks of life—carbon, iron and the rest. ‘Some of this material returns to interstellar space, thereafter to be recycled into new generations of stars.’ It is astonishing to consider that carbon atoms, those in every cell of our blood, in the trees around us, the furniture in our houses, ‘have a pedigree extending back far earlier than our Solar System’s birth 4.5 billion years ago. The Solar System itself condensed from the intermingled debris of many earlier stars.’ Even as I write, dust particles, circling newly forming proto-stars (which are not yet hot enough to ignite their nuclear fuel) are sticking together to make rocky ‘planetesimals’ which merge to make planets.

3. Rees, Before the Beginning, 17.
4. Rees, Before the Beginning, 18–19.
A theological reflection on this basic scientific account of life suggests that not only are we intimately connected with the rest of the universe, but that at a basic level we owe our very existence to the stars we take such delight in observing. To suggest, therefore, that we could exist apart from the cosmos seems to deny the importance of the cosmos for our existence. We are beings in relationship, not simply with our fellow human beings, but indeed with the entire created realm. Even to suggest that we could be bodily resurrected, without an understanding of the resurrection of all of creation, seems to down-play the significance of our relationship with creation. The charge of Gnosticism could be levelled at those who do not give sufficient value to world history and indeed the bodily matter of the cosmos itself. Tibor Horvath, writing within the Catholic tradition, suggests that any eschatology must include the consummation of all things. Bodily resurrection, without any development of the doctrine of the consummation of all things, implies that we could exist without the rest of creation. But this approach ignores the intimate connection we have with all of creation.

2. Finely tuned processes

There is a further reflection which comes from an appreciation of contemporary physics: the processes which allowed the earth itself and then human beings to be formed at all are incredibly delicate and fine-tuned. If the conditions had been subtly different, then life, certainly as we know it, would never have formed. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

The first is a simple point about the conditions on a particular planet that must exist for life to be able to form. Planets where life can evolve must, of course, have sufficient gravity to prevent their atmosphere evaporating into space. They must also be the right distance from a long-lived and stable star, so that they’re not too hot or cold.

The second example is more nuanced. For a carbon nucleus to form (carbon being the critical base for life-forms) beryllium must form. Its

nucleus contains four protons and four neutrons. To then form carbon another helium atom must be captured later in a separate collision. But this can only happen if the beryllium and helium can stick together quickly and easily, because beryllium made in the above manner is unstable and has a very short life-span. There has to be a resonance in the carbon nucleus and without this particular resonance carbon could not have been made in the stars. Somewhat ironically though, if the oxygen nucleus, which forms by carbon capturing a fourth helium nucleus, had a resonance 'the carbon would be processed into oxygen, or even further up the period table, as quickly as it was made.' These particular features of carbon and oxygen, which seem to be simply accidents of nuclear physics, are in fact crucial for the wide-spread existence of carbon in stars and planets, and therefore for the course of cosmic evolution.

Two final examples will show that the conditions in the universe are perfect for the evolution of life and indeed must be this way for us to exist. Firstly, of crucial importance is the finely tuned balance between the effects of gravity and the kinetic energy of the inflationary universe. If gravity had been too strong at any point in the evolution of the universe, expansion would have ceased and the universe would have begun to contract. The galaxies would not have evolved as they did and therefore life would not have emerged. The ratio between the actual density of atoms per cubic metre and the critical density, which would cause expansion to cease, is denoted by the Greek letter Omega. The remarkable fact is that Omega doesn't differ enormously from a ratio of 1 today. ‘There is not a tremendous imbalance between the effects of gravity and the energy of expansion—and this has striking implications for the early universe.’ Either expansion would have rapidly increased or gravity would have stopped the expansion completely. But our universe was given a very ‘finely tuned impetus, exactly enough to balance the decelerating tendency of gravity’ and this is how the universe ended up as it is. Yet this finely tuned balance was achieved incredibly quickly. Very early on the expansion would have been accelerated exponentially, to enable the embryonic universe to inflate, before establishing the balance between gravitational and kinetic energy when it was only $10^{-36}$ seconds old.

Finally, the formation of stars, galaxies and planets depends on ripples or fluctuations in the early universe. The height of the ripples is described

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by the number Q. If Q were too small the universe would be too smooth and remain dark and featureless. On the other hand if Q were too big, 'the cosmic scene would be dominated by black-holes rather than galaxies, and stars (even if they managed to form) would be buffeted too frequently to retain stable planetary systems.' But Q was perfect for the evolution of the universe we now live in and which gave rise to our very existence.

The point of reflecting on the intricate balance of the evolving universe is that our existence is the result of an unimaginably long, complex and finely tuned series of events. Viewed through the eyes of a contemporary physicist, the creation is the result of a fantastic, continuing series of events, which will arguably never be fully understood. Of course God's perspective on creation is one we can only begin to imagine. Accepting, though, that assuming to understand God's perspective is the height of arrogance, if not idolatry, it is nevertheless within the bounds of a theologian's work to assert that God does not view the creation lightly. God delights in all of creation, including the processes of creation, which are intricate and finely-tuned. God would simply not dismiss creation or forget about it. If the argument for God's existence from the design of the world has been made redundant by Darwin's theory of evolution, there is still validity to the suggestion that the processes of creation evoke a sense of awe, appreciation and even love. We appreciate God as the author of these processes. But it is not unreasonable to suggest that God also delights in what he has created.

3. The consummation of all things

If we maintain that God loves the world, which is a fundamental premise of Christianity, then we must also maintain that God loves the very processes by which God brought about the world's existence. Because of the complexity of creation, because of its inherent beauty, because God has been intimately bound up in the long process of creating the world, it is difficult to believe that God would then abandon it or destroy it. It is difficult to believe that God would bring down God's wrath upon it, just as it is difficult to believe that God would abandon it to a slow decline into entropy.

This last point is crucial from a current scientific perspective. There have been various attempts to show that the entire universe may in fact be

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9. Rees, Before the Beginning, 246.
infinite and eternal. The Russian cosmologist Andrei Linde has put forward the suggestion that the universe could indeed be eternal, but that it continually generates inflating regions which evolve into separate universes. This chaotic inflation, referred to by Martin Rees as the ‘multi-verse’ theory has implications for eschatology. The suggestion that the universe is everlasting would seem to negate any need or desire for the ultimate consummation of all things, that is, the cosmos, although the question of theodicy might challenge that perspective—an unjust world, even an eternal one, would need transforming. Having noted the theory of chaotic inflation, or multiverses, it is important to point out that many physicists favour a model of the observable universe which would see it ultimately succumb to the results of continual expansion, condense into enormous black holes and then slowly decline into a state of low grade radiation. This is popularly referred to as the ‘big freeze’ as opposed to the ‘big crunch’ in which gravity finally overcomes the kinetic energy of the universe and the entire universe ends in a ‘singular cosmic melting pot’.10 Whilst this may indeed be the projection made by many physicists, mainstream eschatologists should nevertheless assert that this is not the final word. Whatever the Christian promise of resurrection ultimately might mean, the whole created order will be a fundamental part of that event. It is hardly a Christian position to assert that the ‘big crunch’ will have the final word. It is equally un-Christian, I am asserting, to suggest that the ultimate future for intelligent life, as the background temperature falls, will be to ‘keep cool, think progressively more slowly and hibernate for long intervals.’11 Eschatology, at least in all of its traditional forms, asserts that death, including I suggest the death of the universe, is not the final state of all things. Phillip Tolliday has expressed this position well:

I think we can give all sorts of meanings to ‘the end of the world’ but I think the thing that most distinguishes the theological narrative from the cosmological one is that in the case of the theological story ‘end’ as full stop, no more isn’t really applicable. Sure, it’s the end of a period, the end of world time, of world history, perhaps of mortality, of finitude. But then comes a whole discourse about the kingdom of God; the new heaven and the new earth, a new creation—and

11. Rees, Before the Beginning, 209.
whatever meaning we may give to these, it seems that it must be something other than nothing.\textsuperscript{12}

Not all recent eschatologies share this conviction. Not only have some writers asserted that the resurrection does not have much to do with the cosmos and matter is unable to be brought to a final completion,\textsuperscript{13} but others have asserted that, should the universe finally succumb to entropy, this would seem to deny our faith. Theologians as respected and well-known as John Macquarrie and Ted Peters have asserted this:

Should the final future as forecasted by the combination of big bang cosmology and the second law of thermodynamics come to pass, wherein the law of entropy has the last laugh and the cosmos drifts into a state of irrecoverable equilibrium—and if some consciousness could then say, ‘that’s all there is’—then we would have proof that our faith has been in vain.\textsuperscript{14}

John Macquarrie has expressed something very similar in \textit{Principles of Christian Theology}:

Let me say frankly, however, that if it were shown that the universe is indeed headed for an all-enveloping death, then this might seem to constitute a state of affairs so wasteful and negative that it might be held to falsify Christian faith and abolish Christian hope.\textsuperscript{15}

It is significant, however, that both writers want to avoid separating redemption and transformation from creation itself. That is to say, both share my conviction that creation itself, by which I mean the entire created order—the cosmos—will be transformed in the eschaton. Perhaps


\textsuperscript{13} For a discussion of this issue see Horvath, \textit{Eternity and Eternal Life: Speculative Theology and Science in Discourse}, 148.


the distinction between my position and Peters’ in particular is that Peters wants to affirm that the transformation of the world will be apprehensible temporally.¹⁶ For him eschatology is the link between the eternal and the temporal and the ‘arrival of consummate eternity creates the wholeness of time’.¹⁷ Certainly I would agree with the statement that all of time and all of creation will be gathered and embraced by eternity in the new creation. However, I reject the assertion that this must be temporally apprehensible and that the descent of the cosmos into a state of entropy would seem to deny the existence of God and the reality of Christian hope.

It is therefore from a conviction that God means to transform the world, for the reasons given above, that I want to begin developing an eschatology which takes seriously the fragile world and cosmos we call home. As I began writing this book, my nickname for the work (eventually to become the title proper) was *The Greenie's Guide to the End of the World*. In many ways this is an accurate title. That the world faces an environmental crisis is indisputable. That the world and its people need the hope of the resurrection is an assertion I would make. The task is to develop an eschatology which takes seriously the environmental crisis facing us and yet doesn’t abandon the traditional hope of a transformed world.

4. Method

The book will take the following shape. I shall examine the work of several key theologians, who help shape an ecologically friendly eschatology. The book will build towards a model of ecological eschatology, using the work of these authors. I will undertake a critical theological assessment of each author’s views. Thus my method of developing such a model will be cumulative, with the detailed analysis of each author adding to the construction of the model. Whilst no one author provides us with a complete model, each provides hints and suggestions, which help develop an ecological eschatology. It’s important to note the inherent difficulty of constructing a fully developed eschatology, given the inevitable limitations of human knowledge as it relates to eschatology. This book has the more modest aim of setting out to put in place the crucial elements of a model of ecological eschatology.

A model of ecological eschatology must explain how creation might be eschatologically transformed, and how we might participate in that transformation. Such a model must therefore explain how God might transform creation: I call this the objective side of the model. The model should also explain how human beings and the rest of creation might participate in that transformation: I call this the subjective side of the model.

A model of ecological eschatology is desirable, because it could help people behave more responsibly towards the environment. Thus my hope is that a sense of orthopraxis may emerge from the model, in the sense that it evokes within the reader a desire to act in an ecologically responsible manner. So a model of ecological eschatology ought to encourage us not simply to hope, but also to perform acts of hope. We should be inspired to strive for righteousness, justice and peace now, even as we hope that these things will be established eternally.

The question of God’s transcendence is crucial in the development of the model; the objective side of the model is important, because, as I will show, the transformation of creation is God’s action. However, the subjective side of the model is equally important. Any model of ecological eschatology must affirm the importance of the processes of the world, both human and non-human, in the final consummation of all things. Otherwise the question of the ultimate relevance of those processes emerges. I’m suggesting that, if we accept that the processes of the world, including for example the processes of evolution, are critical to our existence as we know it, then these same processes should be seen as having a participatory role to play in the transformation of creation.

Finally, my aim is to develop a model of ecological eschatology which will be able to be used, in the sense of being a theological basis for education and practical action, in parishes, dioceses and indeed the world-wide communions of churches. Consequently, for the purposes of this book, I will be restricting my focus to Christian theology. For academic theology to be usable in a parish or diocesan setting, it must at least be shown to have evolved from the Christian tradition, rather than be something

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18. For a discussion of this issue see Mark Worthing, God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), especially chapter five, ‘Can God Survive the Consummation of the Universe?’ 160–198. Worthing writes, ‘Only the active presence of the transcendent God of Christian faith redeems the future of the physical universe. Attempts to posit an eternal universe without taking into account the almighty Creator have not been successful.’ Worthing, 198.
completely and radically new. It must show clear and demonstrable links with this tradition.

5. The concept of memory

One of the central concepts in my work is ‘memory’. The importance of memory is highlighted at various points in the work. However, I need to alert the reader to the fact that the concept of memory is used in various ways throughout the book. Sometimes it is understood to mean our remembrance of people. For example, in Elizabeth Johnson’s work the concept of memory is specifically developed, with a focus on our remembrance of those people, saints as she terms them, whose lives would otherwise be forgotten. She discusses several different understandings of memory in her work. Whilst her focus is on human beings remembering other human beings, I will demonstrate that her work is easily adapted to include solidarity with all of creation and the remembrance of those parts of creation which have been victimised or destroyed completely.

In other places throughout the book the concept of memory is used in the sense of God’s memory of us. Creation, including all human beings, will never be forgotten by God. God will remember creation, in the fullest sense of remembrance, meaning that creation will be present and alive in God.

In my work on Alexander Schmemann’s theology the concept of memory is explicitly connected to the liturgy and the remembrance of Christ, particularly in the Eucharist. Human beings also remember all of creation, both in the celebration of the Eucharist and in other acts of remembrance, and in the process of remembering bring creation and themselves to God. Thus the act of remembrance, on the part of human beings, leads to human beings and the rest of creation entering into God’s memory, which must be understood not as timeless eternity, but as everlasting life.

6. Structure

In section one (chapters one and two) I shall briefly analyse some eco-feminist critiques of traditional theology and especially eschatology. Catherine Keller has written at some length on what she views as the critical problems with traditional eschatological models. Keller considers that eschatology, particularly in its apocalyptic form, has not only not paid sufficient attention to the value of creation itself, but has helped promote a
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culture which is anti-environmental. Beginning with the book of Revelation, she has worked extensively on the theme of the sea, as a symbol of biodiversity. It is precisely the sea, which the book of Revelation describes as eventually dying and indeed being no more. Keller suggests that this is symptomatic of apocalyptic eschatology: there is no room for diversity, rather at the end everything will be gathered up into a kind of pristine uniformity. What I will suggest, however, is that Keller’s critique focuses too closely on apocalyptic eschatology, reflecting perhaps in part her location as an American theologian—she develops at some length the link between Christian fundamentalism and industrial expansion. But more than simply focusing only on one branch of eschatology, Keller also fails to develop an alternative which is hopeful in the sense of ultimate hope.

No examination of feminist critiques of eschatology would be complete without an exploration of the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether. She is perhaps the best known eco-feminist to have addressed the topic. Ruether has been particularly critical of what she calls the male desire to dominate the world and to flee from it. It is out of a fear of the earth, the female and all that is not masculine that the desire to escape to a heavenly realm has arisen. She develops an alternative vision of what it means to be Christian in a world which is facing an ecological crisis. I shall critically evaluate her vision and show that it ultimately leaves us in despair.

Section two (chapters three and four) will be spent examining the contributions made by Ulrich Körtner and Jürgen Moltmann to the field of apocalyptic eschatology. Ulrich Körtner’s work is perhaps relatively unknown in English speaking theological circles, but addresses many of the critical issues in this field. Importantly Körtner categorises apocalyptic thought in its various subsections. This reveals that Keller and Ruether have not necessarily understood some of the subtle differences between various kinds of apocalyptic traditions. Jürgen Moltmann is arguably the twentieth century’s greatest contributor to the field of eschatology. His work on apocalypticism and apocalyptic eschatology (he makes a distinction between those two terms) is part of his overall contribution to eschatology. The question which is being asked by examining these two theologians is: ‘Can apocalypticism contribute to the vision of a transformed cosmos, whilst not denying the importance of ecology?’ This is a pertinent issue for the development of an ecologically friendly eschatology, because of the criticisms levelled at apocalyptic world scenarios by writers such as Keller and Ruether. An analysis of Körtner and Moltmann reveals that not
all forms of the apocalyptic tradition are as anti-ecological as Keller and Ruether suggest.

Nevertheless, what I hope to show is that, taken in isolation, apocalypticism, in its various forms, is not able to provide us with a model for ecological eschatology. Other contemporary eschatologies help provide us with a more embracing model, which leads me to critique the work of John Polkinghorne and Ernst Conradie in section three (chapters five and six). Polkinghorne’s model of two worlds, the old creation and the new creation, existing parallel to each other, but linked by projections from the old to the new, allows us to consider exactly how the old and new creation might be related to each other. Conradie also develops his eschatology along similar lines and suggests that a concept of ‘material inscription’ may help us understand the relationship of this world to the world to come. Events throughout history are inscribed into the new creation and indeed form a critical part of that creation. Polkinghorne and Conradie’s similar theological concepts help shape the objective side of the model of ecological eschatology, that is, how God might transform creation. However, in the case of both writers, I will argue that their models do not allow for significant active participation by human beings and the rest of creation in God’s eschatological transformation of all things. That is to say, Polkinghorne and Conradie help in the development of the objective side of the model, but not the subjective side.

The book concludes in section four (chapters seven and eight) with an examination of two writers whose work gives us the final pieces of the puzzle. The work of Elizabeth Johnson and Alexander Schmemann is able to be used as a way of understanding how all of creation might participate in the final consummation of all things: the subjective side of the model. I will discuss how their approach to eschatology might indeed provide the model for understanding the active participation of all of creation in God’s transformation of the cosmos into the eschaton. This is a development of Conradie’s idea of the ‘material inscription’ of the cosmos, but from a more participatory perspective. Johnson is another feminist writer, but one who considers that the traditional eschatological models are not beyond redemption, even given the current ecological crisis and her own feminist convictions. As mentioned above, a part of her theology is the use of memory. She provides four examples of women’s memory: ‘recovering lost memory’, ‘rectifying distortion’, ‘reassessing value’ and ‘re-

speaking the silence’. She also develops the template ‘Narrative memory in solidarity’ with three categories: ‘subversive memory’, ‘critical narrative’ and ‘solidarity in difference’. Her work on memory, and its power, helps us consider how even tragic events in history, and, I will argue, in creation itself, may be redeemed and brought before God in the memories of the living. This model, which, as I will show, finds particular expression in the Eucharist, allows us to cope with those parts of creation, including what Moltmann rather provocatively calls the ‘victims’ of evolution, which have been exploited, damaged or destroyed. Nothing will be lost, but all will be redeemed and, crucially for the development of an ecological eschatology, we have our part to play. Thus the theme of memory or remembrance gives us a hermeneutical key to ecological eschatology. The processes of creation and indeed all of creation itself will never be forgotten, but will be remembered by God in the fullest, most complete Jewish understanding of remembrance. Because God remembers all of creation, in all of its diversity and with all of its faults, what we do now for its preservation ultimately does matter. What we do now is of eternal significance.

Our participation, and that of all of creation, finds expression in liturgical theology. Schmemann’s work on liturgy and symbolism, whilst not that of an ecological theologian per se, can be used nevertheless as a way of understanding how we might participate in the transformation of all things. Through the offering up of all of creation to God, and giving thanks for it, particularly in the Eucharist, we help make manifest the kingdom of God, through the Holy Spirit. This is possible, because the world is understood as a sacrament. In our liturgy, when we bless, or thank, God for his creation, we are giving back to God what God has created. This enables the world to regain its true identity, as belonging to God and existing to sing God’s praises. This liturgical act of giving to God what belongs to God, of returning the matter of life to God, transforms that matter into the material of the kingdom of God. To use Conradie’s term, God inscribes it materially, but, unlike in Conradie’s model, our participation is crucial. To extend Schmemann’s thoughts further, this action is not something restricted to human beings or to the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a symbol, and the climax, of what is happening in a cosmic liturgy. The things of God are being returned to God, and are thus transformed into the things of the kingdom of God. We play our part, as does all of God’s creation, in the cosmic song to God’s glory.