



Hope for the Earth: Vistas for a New Century

Ernst M. Conradie

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'Hope for the Earth' explores the viability of an eschatological approach to an ecological theology, spirituality, and praxis in the South African context. The basic intuition of such an eschatological approach is that an environmental praxis can only be empowered on the basis of an adequate understanding of Christian hope. Despair in the face of environmental destruction will inevitably lead to a spirit of resignation. Where, then, can a vision of hope that includes hope for the earth be found? The author proposes a "road map" for eschatology based on the observation that eschatology has traditionally responded to three aspects of the human predicament, namely 1) the evil effects of sin; 2) the problem of finitude and transience; and 3) the limitations of human power and knowledge in space (Part A). This analysis is used to fathom the depths of despair as a result of environmental destruction (Part B). The Biblical roots and subsequent history of Christian eschatology are discussed briefly (Part C). Recent contributions in Christian eschatology, ecological theology, cosmology, and South African expressions of hope are explored in depth in search of a vision of hope that includes hope for the earth itself (Part D). The eschatological road map is used to develop a vision of hope for the earth on the basis of a theology of life: life amidst death and destruction, life beyond death and eternal life in the presence of God (Part E). Finally the implications of this vision for an ecological ethos, spirituality, and praxis in the South African context are indicated (Part F).

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