Ecologies of Grace

Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology

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Preface

Ecologies of Grace interprets environmental issues through the practical responses of Christian communities and the central resources of Christian theology. It shows how environmental problems trouble the heart of Christian experience and identity, and how theologies of grace can engage, reframe, and maybe transform responses to them.

This project developed over years of international work with Christian communities, study in theological ethics, and teaching environmental thought. More precisely, it developed from the difficulty of integrating those three things: the challenge of environmental problems, the resources of moral theology, and the social practices of faith communities. This book makes an attempt at modeling that integration, bringing together two worlds of professional practice and several literatures in a search for practical environmental theologies.

Living in those worlds and reading in those literatures I have been guided by some wonderful teachers, students, colleagues, and friends. As this book began to take form, it was particularly supported and mentored by Jim Childress and Gene Rogers. Their respective habits of thought shape the project throughout, if only in its aspirations toward Jim's clear ethical framing and Gene's elegant theological argument.

At the beginning of my work overseas I was welcomed into a household that knew the ways of grace in the midst of difficulty and helped lead me to the approach of this inquiry; thanks to Robbinah and Amos Turyahabwe, and Tayebwa, Taremwa, and Tashobya. Later, David Fox took a chance on a young community development worker

and encouraged me into successive arenas of cross-cultural partnership. I thank all those who invited me to see their environmental mission initiatives, including Father Pablo Buyagan, J. B. Hoover, Takao Okemoto, Mark and Karen McReynolds, Ben and Vanessa Henneke, Scott and Carol Kellerman, Geoffrey Abaho Tumwine, and Bishop William Magambo.

I have come to see many environments anew from the students who have journeyed with me to Uganda, and with the Young Adult Service Corps volunteers who let me accompany their cross-cultural journeys in other parts of the world. Rob Mark has kept up a running conversation on faith, justice, and environment that has animated project journeys through Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, the Crow Reservation in Montana, Nova Scotia, and Honduras. Rebekah Menning has been a sustaining companion throughout, quick to ask the practical question and generous with careful readings of many draft chapters.

I came to appreciate the complexity of teaching environmental problems while a fellow at the Institute for Practical Ethics and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. Especially formative was participation in the Institute's faculty workshops, which brought together specialists from across the university to develop interdisciplinary environmental courses. An early attempt to represent and reorder environmental ethics, as appears in chapter 2, was given as a talk there in 2003 and subsequently much revised as a result of my colleagues' responses.

Some of my reflections on lived theologies I first put to words for training sessions on mission and environment for cross-cultural personnel of the Episcopal Church. Their practical and theological feedback from year to year has been most useful. Further reflection on the ecological dimensions of Christian experience and mission commitments grew out of a 2003 presentation to the Costas Consultation on Mission, and six years of deliberation with the Standing Commission on World Mission. I am especially grateful to the Commission for sending me to participate in the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development and the accompanying meeting of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

Early work on Thomas Aquinas was presented to the Lilly "Ecology and Theology" conference at Notre Dame in April 2002, and then published in the *Journal of Religion* in 2003. An early exploration of Sergei Bulgakov was presented to the "Illuminations" conference at Oxford University in June 2002. A portion of chapter 3 on ecojustice was developed for the 2005 Spring Institute on Lived Theology at the University of Virginia, as a presentation with Jürgen Moltmann, whose generous consideration I especially appreciate.

Writing began in earnest while I was a Sara Shallenberger Brown Fellow in Environmental Literature at Brown College in the University of Virginia. The

fellowship offered two idyllic years living in Monroe Cottage, the opportunity to teach seminars in the departments of Religious Studies and Environmental Thought and Practice, and conversation with visiting nature writers.

Teaching courses in interdisciplinary environmental thought, I have been continually pushed by the enthusiasm of many students. I have especially learned from the environment and humanities double-majors at UVA, and count myself peculiarly fortunate now to work with students in a joint graduate program of Yale Divinity School and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

I took my first course in environmental ethics with Jon Cannon, and later came back to teach with him at the UVA School of Law in Fall 2005. This EPA veteran's pragmatic tests for theory chastened my interpretation of environmental ethics, if not the theological ventures that followed. For those Chuck Mathewes has provided unrivalled bibliographic enthusiasm and steadfast encouragement.

I am grateful to many others who took time to read and improve draft chapters. Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Christiana Peppard helped me clarify the introductory remarks on cosmology and ethics. Holmes Rolston commented extensively on an early draft of chapter 2. Margaret Mohrmann helped clear up ambiguities in the chapters on Aquinas. At various stages I received gifts of reading from Tony Baker, Tim Gorringe, Laura Hartman, Rose Jenkins, Chris Morck, Aaron Riches, and Michael J. Smith. Joshua Hill, Khalial Withen, and Anne Jenkins helped bring the manuscript to final form, and Matthew Riley did the index. The care and erudition of copy editor Mary Bellino saved it from many sins. Mistakes remaining despite so many wonderful teachers and friends are my own, by error or obstinacy.

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I

Saving Nature, Saving Grace

Christian communities struggle to talk about life on earth and life with God. That is not a new problem; the tensions of worldly life and Christian life generate enduring discussions for Christian ethics. But environmental issues challenge theological traditions in ways unprecedented by debates over Christian attitudes toward war or sexuality or poverty. For environmental issues present moral problems that escape the received frameworks of theological ethics. Species loss and degraded biodiversity obviously arrest our moral attention, but how do they matter for Christian life? New technological capacities seem to exercise transgressive control over organisms, but what part of the Christian story offers approval or critique? Globalizing capitalism changes everything from agriculture to local economies, but how is it measured by theological wisdom? In an urbanizing world, the need for sustainable planning, housing, and energy use calls for imaginative new political forms, but how are they intelligible to Christian communities? Climate change places new dimensions of society in moral jeopardy, but how is that preachable on Sunday mornings?

Some Christian ethicists think those questions outstrip the competency of traditional theological approaches, forcing novel revisions. Others think they can find new capacities in traditional resources. Either way, Christian environmental ethics attends the challenge these troubling social problems present to theological traditions and moral practices. It works to make environmental issues

intelligible for Christian communities, significant for Christian experience. This book first investigates how ethicists, activists, and Christian leaders draw on their respective traditions in order to meet that challenge, and then contributes to the project by posing to representative theologians the difficulties their strategies encounter. In the first part I trace strategies of ethical response; in the second I explore theological resources that can help their cause.

One could map those strategies by a number of methods and topics. In order to show how closely environmental issues come to the heart of Christian experience and identity, this book charts the relation of salvation stories to environmental ethics. It shows how the metaphors, logics, and narratives of grace shape major patterns of Christian response to environmental problems. The map thus depicts Christianity's environmental strategies following the contour lines of traditions of salvation as they pursue the practical goals of environmental ethics. This book follows three major contour lines, showing how several distinct strategies make environmental issues matter for Christian experience by situating them within one of three ecologies of grace: redemption, sanctification, or deification.

At first glance, soteriology appears an unlikely starting place, for it seems to focus on the human, the spiritual, the interior, the otherwordly—quite the opposite of environmental concerns. Indeed, some compelling critiques blame the human-centered, spiritualized ambitions of salvation stories for generating the bad worldviews that underlie environmental problems. For better worldviews, therefore, Christian environmental ethics often begins from the doctrine of creation, reconsidering the moral dimensions of religious cosmology. Yet, as we will see, ethicists still rely on the tropes and concepts of grace to make those cosmological reformulations come to life within Christian experience. Even while talking about other things, Christian environmental ethics tends to draw on background stories of salvation at the moments it wants to make environmental issues matter for Christian life.

They draw on soteriological narratives, I think, for reasons of pragmatic resonance. Species loss and threats to biodiversity require urgent and wholehearted responses; relationship with God animates Christian responses. Changes in agriculture and land use alter basic patterns of human experience; views of salvation shape the patterns of basic Christian experience. Technologies grow ominous with gargantuan and transgressive power; Christian conversion envisions powers overthrown and transformed. Unsustainable economies and climate change jeopardize contemporary forms of community; Christian communities form within economies of grace.

Revival and Reforestation

I came to this inquiry while working with several Ugandan community development organizations. I had previously taught in a Church of Uganda (Anglican) seminary, in a small regional school for village priests. As I moved from seminary to village organizing, I learned how Ugandan churches theologically mobilize community responses to new social problems. Core parish committees, sometimes centered around revivalist prayer groups, have adapted community responses to HIV transmission and developed AIDS outreaches; they help feed and school orphans; they start and manage local clinics and schools; they protect water sources, organize microdevelopment loans, and plan community land use. And, as priests give voice and authority to their organic theological innovations, all of those practical responses somehow inflect the community's preaching, prayer, and worship.

For each new social problem, church communities were finding ways to redeploy their traditions (both theological and cultural). New forms of Christian practice were striving to keep unprecedented socioeconomic changes from fracturing the centers of common life. Each mode of response, I began to see, invented some new capacity from their traditions.

Many of these church groups, especially in the deforested hill country of western Ankole and Kigezi, include tree-planting initiatives in their activities. Despite familiarity with their expansive register of social ministries, I was surprised to see very poor church communities, possessed of revivalist evangelical faith, working to replant native trees. To my mind, reforestation was an "environmentalist" issue somewhat removed from more immediate concerns, like treating malaria, and traditionally evangelical concerns, like caring for orphans. Yet here were Christian groups who had started a nursery for seedlings and were planting trees all around the village. Priests regularly approved the practice from the pulpit, and when the local bishop made the rounds his exhortations always included tree-planting (along with marriage, sexual fidelity, and good schools).

Why should the revivalist faith of poor community groups express itself in reforestation? How should we understand this practice? If we were to ask the usual diagnostic questions, we would query their background worldview by tests for nature's moral value and for the relative degree of anthropocentrism. Does the community recognize intrinsic value in the integrity of creation? Does it remove humanity from the center of its worldview? My inquiry in this book began in the apparent unhelpfulness of those standard questions. Results for

nature's intrinsic value (low) and anthropocentrism (high) seemed to do a poor job of explaining why revival groups would care about reforestation. Why would tree-planting make it into a sermon headed for an altar call and an outburst of ecstatic dancing? I suspected that I needed to ask theological questions closer to the heart of the community's identity, which meant, for these communities, asking soteriological questions.

That seems true beyond revivalist faith communities. During my time in Uganda I came across Scott and Carol Kellerman, American medical missionaries with the Church of Uganda, who were discovering the environmental dimensions to salvation in another way. The Kellermans had gone to southwest Uganda to serve the Batwa, an indigenous people recently displaced from their home in what is now Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. The forest-dwelling Batwa found themselves adrift in open cultivated landscapes and, marginalized from even subsistence agriculture, their culture and living conditions deteriorated. The Kellermans went to Uganda anticipating medical service and gospel friendship with an outcast people, but found that caring for the Batwa meant caring for the forest they still know as their only home. They have since been working to reconnect the Batwa to the forest by lobbying the government to allow regulated access and by soliciting international grants to create inhabitable buffer areas along the edges of the forest.

The Kellermans came to understand the significance of forest protection and access when they heard Batwa leaders locate their dignity within the forest. It provided not just their foods and medicines, but their stories, skills, and virtues. When encouraged to remember that God still loved them outside of the forest, several Batwa leaders replied that their children were losing the names for God because they no longer knew the names of the forest. What could God's love mean apart from its known habitat, the forest of Batwa culture, language, and divine names? The Kellermans realized that God's special friendship with the Batwa inextricably involved their special connection to that forest. Where, they asked me, do environmental theologians offer ways of understanding that involvement?

A few years later, on the other side of the world, I visited the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Nasushiobara, Japan. ARI is at once an experimental farm for sustainable agriculture, a training institute for non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders from the two-thirds world, and a remarkable interfaith community.[1] Working among its organic chickens, high-yield rice patties, bio-gas generators, and onsite cannery, college volunteers, staff leaders, and NGO participants from around the world form a life together. The community requirements: everyone works and everyone attends chapel. They decide together how to run the farm and why, and they take turns holding chapel, each in the tradition of her or his own faith.

ARI believes that spiritual, economic, and ecological alienations must be healed together, and that the path to restored communion with each other and with God comes through learning the earth's lessons. Roommates Father Jovy, a Filipino Anglican priest, and Markuse, an Indian Hindu, exemplify ARI's lived theology. Both had graduated from the ARI program and started successful ecumenical environmental initiatives in their home countries, and had now come back as staff. Now they share a simple dorm room and a vision for reconciliation through sustainability. Jovy and Markuse believe that interfaith peace comes through collaborative work to restore human communities to ecological harmony. The daily work of understanding and tending fields is for them also the theological work of understanding one another and creatively entering communion with the divine.

This book began from reflection on those innovative theological responses and keeps them close to mind in its way of proceeding.[2] As I reflected on the implicit theologies of ARI, the Batwa, and the revivalist tree-planters, I began to suspect that the usual ways of writing and teaching Christian environmental ethics do not help us understand them as fully as we might. Those lived environmental theologies no doubt enact worldviews as they embody attitudes toward nature's value and humanity's place among it. But they seem to narrate those worldviews according to distinctive grammars of grace. The patterns of their environmental responses seem contoured by their notions of relationship with God. This book follows that suggestion by showing how Christian environmental theologies reshape ways of living on earth within patterns of living with God—how they reinhabit distinct ecologies of grace.[3]

Religious Environmentalism

Maps have their dangers and distortions, of course. Their depictions must simplify landscapes, which can mislead wayfarers or, worse, insulate the observer by lending her a surveyor's sense of control. The best maps not only show a navigable way through; they overlay terrain with references that express the lay of the land. They help readers rediscover and reorient themselves to a place they perhaps already know. Serene Jones, for example, maps together Christian theology and feminist theory "not so much to reconstruct the terrain of faith as to provide markers for traveling through the terrain in new ways."[4] The first part of this book develops markers by describing practical strategies in environmental ethics. I call these "ecologies of grace" to keep the cartographic metaphors close to earth, for these contour lines shape actual patterns of inhabitation. The second part of the book puts the map to a field test, using it to travel through familiar theological terrain in new ways.

My map of Christian environmental ethics charts a known landscape, but its outlines will appear different from most other maps. The contours of grace in Christian environmental ethics have not often been rendered visible, in part because of charged relations between religion and environmental thought. Especially on the contemporary American landscape, religion and nature sometimes appear antagonistic, sometimes symbiotic, sometimes conceptually fused. Those charged relations sometimes produce organic similarities between descriptions of environmental experience and descriptions of religious experience, yet they also have led to the excision of grace from mappings of Christian environmental ethics. Let me illustrate.

Consider how commonly nature writers reach for a salvific metaphor to communicate the power of an environmental experience. Of course, the rapturous John Muir, who saw cathedrals in the forest and choirs in the storms, and who put the words of Jesus into the mouths of trees, often did. His register was blatantly soteriological ("I pressed Yosemite upon him like a missionary offering the gospel").[5] I have in mind the more subtle reaches of down-to-earth environmental writers, like the scientist Rachel Carson: "There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature."[6] Or the usually plainspoken forester Aldo Leopold; when explaining what he learned from "the fierce green fire" in a wolf's eyes and from trying to "think like a mountain," Leopold misquotes Thoreau's dictum, "In wildness is the preservation of the world," to say "In wildness is the *salvation* of the world."[7] He immediately goes on to say that "this is the hidden meaning of the wolf, long known to mountains."[8]

Contemporary environmental writers do this too. Scott Russell Sanders writes that encountering nature involves a kind of faith "in the healing energy of wildness, in the holiness of creation. One of the reasons many of us keep going back to Thoreau and Muir and Leopold and Carson is because they kept that faith."[9] Environmental writing seems to dwell within the literatures of faith, as is attested by the fact that an editor would ask the nature writer Barry Lopez to introduce an anthology of spiritual writing. Lopez does so by focusing on the cultivation of reverence, which allows a landscape to enter and elevate a person.[10] Humans are "creatures in search of . . . a pattern of grace," writes Lopez elsewhere.[11] When "the land gets inside of us," says Lopez, those patterns of grace are crucial for deciding what we will do about it.[12]

These writers seem to sense that they hold a sacred trust, remembering forms of holiness and salves of healing nearly forgotten by an alienated world. Terry Tempest Williams: "There is a holy place in the salt desert, where egrets hover like angels . . . I am hidden and saved from the outside world."[13] Even David Gessner, who professes to be sick of pious writing about nature, cannot help saying in the concluding words of one book, "If we look for it, we will find

that a whole world is waiting for us. And it is in that world that we, not seeking it, will find a sort of salvation."[14] Some of our best environmental writers exhibit an organic reach toward grace.

Other cultural observers have noticed this spiritual creep in environmental thought and trace religious valences in American environmentalism, sometimes with dismay. The veneration of nature, the feelings of prophetic alienation, the raptures and epiphanies, the sense of apocalyptic doom, the missional project of personal and cultural transformation—all this makes the environmental movement look religious.[15]

Meanwhile, the religious are beginning to look environmental. Religious leaders from many traditions have committed their respective faiths to addressing environmental problems. Religious communities in many nations have begun to lift their voices for greener policies, and faith-based grassroots organizations around the world work to reclaim, restore, and replant. Religious thinkers regularly propose ecological retrievals, critiques, and revisions of their traditions.[16]

The charged relations amidst religious and environmental thought produce an ambivalence in what we might mean by "religious environmentalism." It could mean the environmental responses and practices of established religious communities. These include a range of phenomena from religious redefinitions of environmental goals to the participation of religious adherents in broader social reform movements. Or religious environmentalism could mean the religious themes of environmental thought. These include a range from the missionary postures of the environmental movement to the spiritual dimensions of environmental experience. And there are hybrid uses of the term, used to describe the reemergence of nature religions, or to communicate the perception that global environmental problems are so complex, terrifying, and significant that they require a religious register for understanding and responding to them.[17]

The diverse, charged, and urgent conceptions of religious environmentalism challenge the organization of mutually intelligible conversations—let alone practical coordination and research collaborations. Participants may arrive to vindicate or vilify religions, and vindicate or vilify modern science; to mine religion's conceptual resources or politically mobilize its constituents; they may represent dominant or minority views from a tradition, and conservative or revisionary approaches to interpreting them; they may have particularist or universalist regard of other traditions, and eagerness or wariness to engage them. They may found their primary hope (or despair) in a view of politics, a particular faith, or a sense of nature.

The pluriform, ambivalent relationship between religious and environmental thought has indirectly led to some confusing maps of Christian environmental

ethics. For not only do its cartographers work with one or another sense of that relationship and organize their terrain accordingly. In recent years one particular sense of "religious environmentalism"—a sense formed by suspicion of salvation stories—has informed work within specifically Christian environmental ethics and shaped its representation to wider arenas of religious and environmental thought. The curious result: Christian environmental ethics often avoids making visible the soteriological concepts used natively by revivalist reforesters and instinctively by environmental writers.

After Lynn White: Cosmology and Christianity

For the purposes of enabling useful conversation in so ambiguous an arena, with such diverse participants addressing urgent questions, the interdisciplinary arena of "religion and ecology" has constructed a framework of proven worth: look to how religions shape worldviews, for better or worse, regarding nature's value and humanity's place amidst it. By focusing discussion of religious environmentalism on ecological cosmology, collaborative exchanges can not only accommodate great religious, political, and methodological diversity, but also refer to shared criteria of interest.

Cosmology thus makes a capacious forum, inviting mutually intelligible and practically useful conversation. It entertains analyses of religious narratives or religiously inflected worldviews that shape environmental values or interpret forms of human inhabitation. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, convenors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology and editors of the Harvard book series Religions of the World and Ecology, thus begin the invitation in their series foreword by connecting religious cosmology and environmental ethics:

> Religions provide basic interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from, and where we are going. This comprises a worldview of a society. Religions also suggest how we should treat other humans and how we should relate to nature. . . . Religions thus generate worldviews and ethics which underlie fundamental attitudes and values of different cultures and societies.[18]

No matter one's sense of religious environmentalism, then, participants can share the practical task of examining how environmental values are shaped by basic interpretive stories.[19] By focusing on worldviews, the Forum on Religion and Ecology brings together academics, activists, and religious leaders to illuminate the "role that religious traditions play in constructing moral frameworks and orientating narratives regarding human interactions with the environment."[20]

Evaluating that role, participants can work in their various capacities to celebrate, criticize, redirect, strengthen, or revise it.

Within Christian environmental theology, however, the cosmological arena for religious environmentalism has indirectly led to some unhelpful ways of understanding and organizing its own internal pluralism. Cosmological mappings can obscure the native terrain here because, by historical accident, a particular sense of "worldview" already shapes recent theological responses. That is to say, Christian environmental theology has so oriented its contributions to the worldviews discussions that it can misrepresent or obscure significant contours of its own "moral frameworks and orientating narratives." Consequently, it often enters discussions of religious environmentalism with its most powerful and most useful theological resources concealed beneath cosmological overlays.

In 1967, Lynn White published a now famous article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," which indicted a Christian worldview for environmental problems.[21] Accepted or disputed, his remarkably generative thesis set the agenda for Christian environmental theologies in the following decades: if problems arise from a religiously anthropocentric worldview with little intrinsic value for nature, then Christian thinkers needs to vindicate their cosmology on those terms, recuperate minority resources from forgotten cosmologies, or propose a new cosmology. Obviously that agenda makes room for great diversity, and quite alternative proposals have proliferated. However, in the success of White's article in sustaining debate, the diverse literatures of late-twentieth-century Christian environmental thought concentrated their development in reference to White's peculiar notion of environmental worldviews.[22]

White's critique of Christianity operated with three assumptions about religious worldviews: that they generate social practices, that they should be measured by the criteria of intrinsic value and anthropocentrism, and that salvation stories threaten environmentally benign worldviews.[23] The legacy of those assumptions can simultaneously overemphasize and overdetermine the significance of cosmology for Christian ethics.

The first assumption permits scholars to focus on how worldviews generate ethics without asking where worldviews come from. What logics of production shape the making of worldviews? Directly after calling attention to the way "religions . . . generate worldviews," Tucker and Grim quote White: "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them." The editors want to point out the environmental consequence measured by White's worldview diagnostics: "Have issues of personal salvation superseded all others? . . . Have anthropocentric ethics been all consuming? Has the material world of nature been devalued by religion?"[24]

Those questions underscore the practical significance of paying attention to cosmologies. In an age of environmental distress, such questions indicate that, as Larry Rasmussen says, "ethics and cosmology are inextricable, indissoluble," because we know that our stories about the world involve a terrible alienation of humanity and ecology.[25]

Within Christian theology, however, accepting the moral significance of cosmology should not distract attention from the patterns by which religions tell their stories, or the practices by which worldviews are generated. What are the grammars of narration? Within Christianity, I am suggesting they may be grammars of grace.[26] How do cosmologies take shape within patterns of religious experience? I am proposing that, within Christian environmental theology, patterns of salvation can help us understand the way cosmologies come alive in Christian experience. To understand how Christian attitudes to the world may be revised and reformed, we need to explore their theological roots, finding their resources for revision and practical logics of reform. Perhaps worldviews give rise to ethics, but suppose that religious communities generate and regenerate worldviews through innovative social practices. Following a clue from the revivalist reforesters, I wonder whether soteriology might illuminate logics of practical adaptation. Following the hunch of the nature writers, I wonder whether vocabularies of grace might name resources for restoring cosmologies broken by alienation.

White's second and third assumptions about worldviews, however, tend to turn attention away from such proposals. By casting suspicion on salvation and organizing debate around criteria of anthropocentrism and nature's value, White's assumptions keep the focus away from soteriological roots while at the same time determining the acceptable content of decent worldviews. Yet both assumptions seem less than certain. In the next chapter we will find a number of scholars in secular environmental ethics questioning the usefulness of anthropocentrism and nature's value for organizing environmental ethics. Should they remain authoritative in the religious field? Then, in subsequent chapters, we will see how Christian environmental thinkers regularly draw on salvific metaphors to restore our lost senses to earth. What theological roots generate that organic reach toward grace?

Ever alive to White's critique, the response from Christian environmental theologies has been garbled. They tend to downplay talk about salvation even when they follow patterns of grace or reach for symbols of redemption. Thus White's notion of cosmology still shapes responses even when a theologian overturns the White hypothesis and blames environmental problems on the demise of a Christian worldview. George Rupp, for example, argues that it "is only when the transcendent God of biblical religion is no longer thought to

intervene in the world as either creator or as redeemer that the full force of claims for human dominion over nature becomes evident."[27] His point is that a worldview with transcendence better meets White's criteria for non-anthropocentrism and nature's value. But Rupp still implicitly accepts White's underlying supposition, that a background worldview drives environmental attitudes, and orients his theological response to White's criteria. So do other defenses of Christianity against White: perhaps our worldview was disenchanted by the loss of divine transcendence, the demise of medieval orders, or even the attenuation of personal religious experiences.[28] No matter Christianity's culpability, whether novel threat or paradise lost, some deformed worldview explains the problem and a reconstructed or reclaimed cosmology remains the hinge to an adequate ethic.

Tucker and Grim constructively harness this lasting power of White's thesis in order to shape an arena of practical response:

> While the particulars of [White's] argument have been vehemently debated, it is increasingly clear that the environmental crisis . . . present[s] a serious challenge to the world's religions. This is especially true because many of these religions have been concerned with the path of personal salvation, which frequently emphasized otherworldly goals and rejected this world as corrupting. Thus how to adapt religious teaching to this task of revaluing nature so as to prevent its destruction marks a significant new phase in religious thought.[29]

Christian ethicists therefore know that no matter their position on White, whether they agree or not with his indictment of Christianity, they share in a common task: challenging bad legacies of salvation and revaluing nature. Why not do that by engaging soteriology? That seems to be where the problem lies. Why should Christian theologians talk about nature and worldviews when Christianity centers around talk of nature and grace? Tucker and Grim ask forum participants to focus on practical tasks: to identify resources with "transforming energies" for everyday practice, to renovate senses of "a desirable human presence with the earth," and to look for religious patterns "that differ from those that have captured the imagination of contemporary industrialized societies which regard nature primarily as a commodity to be utilized."[30] Where shall Christian ethicists find resources for transformation, desire, presence, and imagination?

William Schweiker suggests that, in an environmental era threatened by overreaching human power, the theological key for reimagining our myths and transforming our desires lies in reconnecting depictions of creation with

concepts of grace. Contemporary ethicists must reunite them, he says, perhaps by reexamining how Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth integrate creation within redemption. From them, ethicists might relearn how "the story of grace, the new creation, articulates the core meaning of creation." For Schweiker, Christianity's cosmogenic logics of production, the powerful patterns by which Christianity generates new worldviews, source from God's giving and forgiving responses to the world.[31]

Yet environmental theologies often appear chary of salvation talk, especially as it appears in the likes of Thomas and Barth. It seems too individualist, too dualist, too anthropocentric, too otherworldly, too hierarchical, or too gnostic to relate to ecological matters.[32] But just those critiques should elicit reassessments and reinvestigations of the role salvation stories play vis-à-vis Christian environmental ethics. Rosemary Radford Ruether's splendid association of western views of salvation with a technocratic cultural project driven by demons of egoist immortality, misogyny, and a general flight from the earthly entreats further investigations into the charged relations between patterns of grace, forms of social life, and environmental problems. The power of Reuther's critique implies that ways to a "new earth" must include soteriological reconstruction, dismantling poor or violent salvation stories, and naming patterns of earthly grace.[33]

But environmental theologians tend to remain aloof from soteriology, even while their cosmologies appropriate metaphors of salvation and their normative appeals follow major forms of grace. In the next chapter we will hear the complaint of environmental pragmatists that secular environmental ethics has accepted devices of debate far removed from the concerns of lived environmental experience.[34] They want the field to become more "practical" by organizing its pluralism according to the way it makes a difference for moral decision-making. Suppose we ask the pragmatist question of environmental theologies: how do they make environmental issues part of Christian moral experience? Say they describe nature's value in a Christian worldview; what does that value mean for Christian life? What parts of the Christian story guide the way churches should think about species loss or sustainability or community gardens? What role do environments play in God's invitation to participate in the divine life? To become disciples of Jesus Christ?

There are a number of good ways Christian ethicists can answer those questions, but rarely do they organize their answers in reference to grammars of grace. Surveys explaining the options for environmental theology usually organize the field along cosmological axes, using one or another of the criteria that emerged from White's article. So Michael Northcott's *Christianity and Environmental Ethics*, even though critical of White's analysis, organizes

environmental theologies according to whether their view of theological reality is anthropocentric, theocentric, or ecocentric.[35] Max Oelschlaeger's *Caring for Creation*, also critical of the White debate, divides environmental theologies by the degree to which their cosmology is open to scientific engagement.[36] Stephen Scharper in *Redeeming the Time* and Paul Santmire in *Nature Reborn* figure the options in environmental theology have to do with the critical mode (e.g., revisionist, reconstructionist, apologist) by which one meets White's challenge to include nature in theological cosmology.[37] *The Greening of Theology*, by Steven Bouma-Prediger, comes closest to soteriology; after arguing against White, it examines proposals in environmental theology by how they reconceive doctrines of anthropology, creation, and God—but stops just short of asking how they reconceive what binds together that cosmological nexus.[38]

Each scholar professes, however, that not cosmology itself but a search for a practical theology of environmental practices animates their work. Bouma-Prediger's fundamental question is how we can "engage in discipleship which envisions care of creation as essential to the practices of Christian faith."[39] Oelschlaeger concentrates on creation stories because he thinks they shape our ethical direction, contextualizing moral attitudes.[40] Northcott recuperates Hebrew cosmology in order to illuminate an ordered relationality between humanity and nature, where ecology shapes moral personhood.[41] Santmire's exploration into Christian cosmological metaphors wants to inform Christian participation in public policy.[42] In other words, each wants to somehow connect environmental issues with Christian identity. They explore cosmology in pursuit of a pragmatic strategy that aims to make nature matter for Christian moral experience. They want something near to what Peter Scott calls a "political theology of nature": an account of how relationship with God shapes relations among humanity and nature.[43] So why call that a cosmological task?

Pastoral Strategies and Environmental Theologies

All of these field guides want to identify and deploy theological resources adequate for making environmental issues intelligible and urgent for human experience.[44] They want what I call a practical strategy. As we might expect, some of the activist participants in the Forum on Religion and Ecology want something similar, and they focus more directly on practical theologies by coming nearer the language of grace. Walter Grazer, who works on environmental issues within the U.S. Catholic Church, chafed a bit at the cosmological reformulations of the academic theologians and said his faith community needs a "pastoral strategy" embedded "within the spiritual and sacramental context of Catholic

theology." Grazer wants ethicists to make environmental concerns intelligible within ongoing Catholic practices of prayer, liturgy, and scripture reading. Responses from representatives of the National Council of Churches and the Evangelical Environmental Network exhibited similar strategic focus.[45] The activist participants in the forum seem to want theological resources that bring environmental issues into contact with the lived faith of their communities, and they seem disappointed by what academic theologians tend to offer.

Those activists look for the sort of practical strategy Bouma-Prediger has in mind when he says he wants Christians to answer the question, "So why care for the earth?" with many variations on "Because, in sum, care for the earth is integral to what it means to be a Christian—it is an important part of our piety, our spirituality, our collective way of being authentically Christian."[46] Being Christian undoubtedly involves worldviews, but adherents would unlikely first turn to cosmology if asked, "why be Christian?" They would likely talk about experiences of grace or spiritual vocation or biblical narrative or the way of Jesus.

Susan Power Bratton agrees that environmental theologies sometimes linger in preoccupation with worldviews. "In terms of relationship to the environment, the most important issue," she claims, "is the concept that contact with creation . . . is spiritually beneficial, and that work in, with or for creation forwards holiness or righteousness." Not worldviews but spiritual experience links environmental care to Christian identity. "The key in actual Christian practice appears to be not whether one considers God transcendent, but whether one expects God's day to day activity to be evident in creation." Not so much an aspect of cosmology but an anticipation of experiencing the divine moves Christian practice. Therefore, "contemporary Christian ecotheology is spending too much time arguing with its critics and fretting over cosmology. . . . An emphasis on Christian lifestyles and spiritual practices has historically been a more productive approach." For Bratton, environmental theologies should focus on the role of nature in the dynamics of spiritual experience.[47]

By interpreting the way spiritual practices incorporate nature into Christian experience, soteriological investigations can illuminate productive sites of practical reason and human reform. The White-shaped concentration on worldviews cannot do that as effectively, for its criteria for religious reform can snarl internal debates into exchanges less immediate to the practical issues at hand.[48] Perhaps some religious traditions would rethink themselves more usefully, even more thoroughly, outside the terms of worldviews. Christian communities might find revisiting their christology or their mission commitments more transformative and more helpful for adapting their faith to meet environmental problems. Why insist that they develop new worldviews? Christian ethicists want to redeploy theological traditions "in a way that influences not only the

development of doctrine, but also the life of faith." Why not let heart-stretching narratives of God's love decenter our arguments over creation's center?[49]

George Kehm argues that a practical environmental theology must "demonstrate the indispensability to the Christian story of an idea or theological claim: that this idea or claim must be in the story or else the story would not be that story."[50] It must show precisely how, as Luke Johnson writes, environmental problems are "a crisis in Christian identity."[51] Insofar as Christianity revolves around a story of persons healed, covenant restored, sinfulness redeemed, experience made holy, or the world reconciled, so far should environmental theologies seek soteriological roots.[52] A practical Christian ethic, in other words, should show how the environmental crisis amounts to a crisis in the intimacies of God's salvation.

Joseph Sittler, who began writing theology for the environmental crisis years before Lynn White and his respondents, insists that "nothing short of a radical relocation and reconceptualization of the reality and doctrine of grace is an adequate answer to that problem."[53] For Sittler, the church rediscovers its relation to the natural world by reconsidering its teachings on the presence of God for humanity. For in God's saving acts we find a doctrine "large enough and ready enough and interiorly most capable of articulating a theological relationship between theology and ecology."[54] The paradoxes of grace and nature orient human persons to both humble soil and heavenly glories, shaping them for friendship with God and love of the world.

Sittler thus suggests that environmental theologies should focus on showing how life with God and life on earth are shared ventures. But it is no easy task, for as Oliver Davies (among a number of recent theologians) laments, modern theology somewhere lost the facility to hold together divine and natural aspects of createdness. Davies diagnoses that failure in the displacement of theological reasoning from contextually embodied orientations to God. If "our intimacy with God is set outside our intimacy with the world," says Davies, then theology will fail to make sense of creation. In order for intimacy with God to illuminate the way of the world into Christian experience, theology must assume some "intrinsic relatedness of self and world on the grounds of a common relation to the Creator God."[55]

Davies argues that when Christianity fails to maintain triadic relations among humanity, creation, and God's presence, Christian experience loses its sense of the world. Failing to hold together God's invitation to human persons and the human enfleshment within creation, says Davies, Christianity impoverishes both its christology and its soteriology—and so begins to lose the very center of its faith. So Davies raises the practical stakes: if Christians inadequately understand the ecology of God's desire for humanity then they stutter

before the fullness of their gospel. So too the converse: if they inadequately connect God's saving work to inhabiting creation, environmental theologies will sit awkwardly with Christian identities.[56]

Sittler and Davies thus connect environmental issues to pastoral strategies from both sides. Without the fullness of grace, a Christian environmental ethic will falter. Without its environmental dimensions, the Christian story of salvation will falter. That not only issues a challenge but presents an organizing clue: if Sittler and Davies are right, then we would expect the practical strategies of Christian environmental ethics to organically reach for soteriological concepts as they try to communicate the significance of nature for Christian experience.

Three Practical Strategies, Three Ecologies of Grace

Sociologist Laurel Kearns has conducted one of the few survey examinations of the way public theologies develop their own practical rationalities for environmental issues.[57] Her observation finds "three broadly defined 'ethics' or 'models' emerging among organizational proponents of Christian eco-theology in the United States," which she identifies as ecojustice, Christian stewardship, and creation spirituality.[58] The positions tend to align with denominational identities, Kearns observes, but differ in ways more significant than institutional reference: the three environmentalisms "clearly appeal to different theological frameworks." Expositing those frameworks lies outside the scope of her project, but Kearns argues that each funds a separate strategy for faith-based environmentalists, "people who are attempting to make eco-theology 'come alive in people's minds and hearts,'" so that it "make[s] sense emotionally and practically to those it intends to reach."[59] Strategies of environmental theology are practical, Kearns implies, insofar as they animate environmental issues within Christian experience.

Kearns's research outlines three distinct ways of animation, or three methods for communicating nature's significance for Christian experience. So there are multiple practical strategies and, as we will see with secular environmental ethics in the next chapter, each exhibits its own notion of the "practical"—of what an ethic must do both to engage environmental problems and to make a claim on moral experience. Uncovering those various notions, and showing how each one relates to a secular precedent, we will excavate competing and sometimes complementary notions of what an ethic must accomplish in order to make both environmental and theological sense.

My map of the field takes Kearns's sociological research as initial evidence of three pastoral strategies for making life on earth and life with God shared

ventures. Listening to Sittler and Davies, I sort Christian environmental ethics by the ways they draw on concepts of grace in order to bind those ventures together. Following lessons learned from innovative African environmentalisms, I look to how metaphors of salvation guide the formation of practical Christian strategies. Reading secular environmental ethics, I sketch the relation of Christian strategies to their nontheological counterparts. If these cartographic cues hold together, traditions of grace function as markers of practical strategies within Christian environmental ethics. Each strategy follows the broad contour line of a theology of grace in order to at once engage environmental issues and animate Christian moral experience.

The first part of this book develops that map, showing how three broad strategies within Christian environmental ethics correspond to three broad theologies of grace. Ecojustice theologies tend to rely on a view of sanctification in which grace illuminates creation's integrity. Stewardship theologies rely on tropes of redemption, where encounter with God creates vocational responsibilities to care for creation. What I call "ecological spiritualities" appropriate themes of deification, by which personal creativity brings all creation into the gift of union with God. Each strategy brings environmental issues within Christian moral experience according to a background pattern of grace. Each strategy thus tries to meet the practical goals of environmental ethics with the attendant promise and limitations of those background views.[60]

My consequent reorganization of the field helps explain why we find certain patterns of normative appeal corresponding to certain theological communities. Evangelicals respond to ethical arguments that would fall flat on Eastern Orthodox ears—and not because of the cosmological criteria. By the test of anthropocentrism, Evangelicals and Orthodox might align fairly closely. Their pictures of grace, however, are exotic to each other, and they generate markedly different forms of environmental ethics. On the other hand, shared patterns of grace indicate that Christian environmentalisms widely divergent in sociographic context or methodological commitment may share a normative strategy. In chapter 5 we will see how creation spirituality advocates and Orthodox ethicists, though they likely could not share a sanctuary, worry about similar problems and draw from the same theological well to address them. In turn they are liable to similar critiques and face similar normative challenges.

The reader may observe that these three soteriological strategies seem to represent the three major ecclesial traditions: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, for ecojustice (sanctification), stewardship (redemption), and ecological spirituality (deification), respectively. As we will see, there is some correspondence between the theological communities that characteristically make certain kinds of environmental arguments and the notions of grace

standing behind those arguments. Mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic communities tend to make ecojustice arguments; evangelical Protestants tend to make stewardship arguments; Eastern Orthodox communities tend to make what I call ecological spirituality arguments. But these are only tendencies, I suspect, because those communities tend to understand grace and salvation in distinct ways. If a Roman Catholic finds herself drawn to the ethics of ecological spirituality, I would wager that she also finds in the narrative of deifying union a compelling understanding of grace.

Up to now I have multiplied usages of "grace" without specifically defining the term. Beyond admitting that it generally refers to a divinely initiated relationship of God and creation, I will go on doing so. Using grace as a device for sorting diversity relies on supposing that it functions differently within different traditions. What it means for Roman Catholics differs from what it means for Protestants—and famously. What grace means within Protestantism differs in manifold nuance. One might argue that Christian diversity is characterized by distinct expressions of grace and ongoing contests for its definition. So much the better for my map and its usefulness.

Scholars who see the plurality of Christian environmental theologies often struggle to identify shared theological forms within the pluralism or to diagnose the practical implications to their differences. This map tries to illuminate the pluralism, outline its forms of organization, and indicate its practical significance. One of its benefits is that it admits more pluralism, even as it gives the field more coherent form. This map should then be useful to readers from a wide range of interests in "religious environmentalism," from Christian activists to scholars, nonreligious NGO leaders to pastors.

Moreover, insofar as my soteriological interpretation holds, the internal questions and problems of each strategy of environmental ethics can be investigated through those background views of grace. In order to test the usefulness of my map, therefore, the second part of this book works over the practical questions and theological problems arising from each strategy of the first part, putting those questions and problems to a theologian representative of its respective soteriology. For insofar as Christian environmental ethics follows a background pattern of grace, these theologians of grace can help illuminate their full promise, and address (or exacerbate) their most vulnerable liabilities.

This reintroduction to Christian environmental ethics thus proceeds pragmatically, by several measures. First, it sorts the proliferating texts of environmental ethics and theologies by their implicit normative goals, organizing an intelligible plurality of practical strategies. Second, as the Christian strategies transform secular strategies with theological resources, it highlights the consequences for policy and practice. Third, it shows how environmental problems

press theological traditions to revise and renew themselves by adapting, intensifying, and redeploying the earthly senses of Christian life. And finally, perhaps most importantly, this book moves toward making better sense of lived Christian environmentalisms by showing how theological resources make complex social problems intelligible within enduring Christian narratives.

Reader's Guide

At this point a guide to the book's layout may help the reader find chapters especially useful to her interests, and to understand how they relate to the other chapters. The book is divided into two parts. The first part surveys the field of Christian environmental ethics; the second offers constructive theological investigations that test the field's background patterns of grace. Part I outlines major ethical strategies of secular and Christian environmental ethics. Part II takes up the questions and problems those strategies face with a theologian representative of each ecology of grace.

We begin with the nonreligious field. Chapter 2 identifies general capacities that environmental problems require from ethics (religious or otherwise). What makes for an adequate environmental ethic? I trace the outlines of an answer by describing criteria proposed in the various strategies of environmental ethics. If we know what secular environmental ethics tries to accomplish, perhaps we can judge how well or differently Christian environmental ethics meets those goals. In other words, the practical requirements for adequately addressing environmental problems offer some initial evaluative devices for reading Christian environmental ethics.

Unfortunately, that is no straightforward initial step, for the field of environmental ethics is a contest unto itself. It still debates its normative tasks, still searches for even a shared notion of what it would mean for an ethic to be "practical." One symptom of that muddled contest will be found in this chapter's thinner conceptual language: describing the field's breadth and goals eludes clear descriptive prose. That complicates the task for Christian environmental ethics, for rather than receiving well-framed problems it must internally decide what makes for an environmental issue and articulate what it would mean to adequately address it.

There are then two reasons for starting with a long chapter on nonreligious theorists in order to introduce specifically Christian environmental ethics.[61] First, I want to show the plurality of normative strategies in nonreligious environmental ethics. That will help us better understand the plurality in Christian environmental ethics by loosing it from the organizing device of anthropocentrism.

By mapping the several broad ways that nonreligious ethics frames environmental problems, we will be able to see how the Christian strategies adopt similar frames, but by deploying theological concepts transform them, reconstituting environmental problems in new ways. The descriptions of the secular strategies thus allow for heuristic comparison with the corresponding Christian strategies; in their respective differences lies the Christian contribution to the public effort to understand environmental problems.

The second reason for beginning within the muddle of environmental theory is to develop a method of dealing with its normative pluralism that in turn we can use to interpret the theological pluralism in Christian environmental ethics. By reading environmental ethics for its practical strategies, we can isolate a few minimum practical criteria that in turn can help organize the muddle of Christian environmental ethics into identifiable strategies. Beginning with the philosophers, therefore, we can distill the problem-frames with which the theologians seem to be working and, with their religious resources, transforming. And we can test the theological strategies by the practical criteria generated from the secular field.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 then map the Christian strategies. They suggest that the Christian renditions select one of the secular strategies according as it fits with a background pattern of grace, and then use soteriological concepts to expand and intensify that strategy's practical facility. Even when ethicists criticize salvation stories, we will see, they tend to draw on salvific metaphors, appropriating both their promise and their liabilities. In other words, the theological accounts reach for concepts of grace to help accomplish practical ethical functions. I read the result as "ecologies of grace"—theological habitats that shape the significance of nature for Christian experience.

These three chapters therefore describe three strategies organically related to major traditions of grace and to the practical strategies of environmental ethics. Chapter 3 shows how *ecojustice* theologies tend to rely on the way sanctification forms persons by God's presence in creation. Chapter 4 describes *stewardship* theologies, which tend to follow the obedient discipleship themes in redemption. Chapter 5 uses the rubric of *ecological spiritualities* to gather together proposals united by their appropriation of deification themes, where communion with creation becomes part of union with God.

These chapters show how various pastoral strategies make environmental issues significant for Christian moral experience by inscribing them within notions of salvation. Each chapter illustrates the distinctive theological vocabularies and grammars deployed to orient Christian ethics toward practical engagement with environmental issues. In this section I try to populate the map with markers of representative texts. Some of the cartographic associations may

surprise; so scanning through the notes here may enrich the reading. Insofar as my map works, it collects general questions and problems for each Christian environmental strategy that can be further tested within those background theologies of salvation.

In part II of the book I try that, putting both the theological problems and lingering environmental questions to major theologians of grace. These chapters are necessarily brief and merely suggestive. Two chapters each on Thomas Aquinas (6 and 7), Karl Barth (8 and 9), and Maximus the Confessor as interpreted through Sergei Bulgakov (10 and 11) allow me to offer three demonstrations of the hypothesis that exploring patterns of grace can illuminate and deepen Christian environmental ethics. Each theologian, in his own way and for his own tradition, made creation a habitat of grace. Reading them through the concerns of environmental ethics I explore those habitats. What hope does Christian salvation offer for earth and the restless desires of its human inhabitants? What forms of healing do the traditions of grace envision for Christian social practices?

I do not mean to propose the authority of these particular theologians for environmental theology. Rather, I want to heuristically illustrate how the problems and promise of Christian environmental ethics can be developed by examining the patterns of grace on which its strategies rely. I might have chosen other theologians (and at times in writing wished I had). In part for their enduring influence on understandings of grace, in part by accidents of education, and in part from a hunch of undiscovered resources, I chose Thomas for ecojustice ethics, Barth for stewardship ethics, and Bulgakov for ecological spiritualities.

Thomas and Barth make convenient figureheads for famously contrasting views of sanctifying grace and redeeming grace. I do not have space to defend or defeat the contrast; I only rely on its fittingness for this environmental exercise. Sergei Bulgakov, a twentieth-century Russian Orthodox priest, is lesser known and much more controversial as a representative of deifying grace. In consequence, those two chapters proceed differently than the ones on Thomas and Barth. I begin with Maximus the Confessor and then develop the fittingness of Bulgakov for the problems faced by ecological spirituality by showing how he addresses similar challenges by drawing from Maximus.

Each theologian has been followed by scholastic contests of interpretation. Beyond convenient association, I do not claim that these theologians represent the formal difference among Christian traditions, nor that these three traditions comprehend Christian thinking on grace, nor even that these figures must support the environmental strategy I assign them. One could make a good case for using Thomas in relation to each one of the strategies. My chapters try to keep

in focus how the environmental questions in part I guide new inquiry into the theologians, and how the theologians may answer those questions. My investigations can at best note the interpretive contests and add to the list of their consequences. These chapters attempt to enter the theological world of each figure as if an ecology of grace, illustrating how it makes nature significant for Christian experience, and how it answers (or fails) the practical questions arising from Christian environmental ethics.

My interpretation of their notions of grace, however provocative, will therefore appear indirectly, as I develop it through peculiarly environmental questions. These chapters begin to limn more ecological renditions of grace, but only insofar as questions from environmental ethics find those capacities in each theologian's account. To find fuller, less novel introductions to each figure, follow the evidence of the notes in part II. To find greener, more novel environmental theologies, look to the notes from the corresponding chapters in part I.

My overall aim is to map the variety of Christian environmental ethics, explaining its patterns, capacities, and challenges, and to invite Christian environmental ethics into more fertile theological ground. I do not then accumulate evidence for a synthetic proposal of my own, but rather work to richly describe three ecologies of grace. The ethical strategies I sketch can and do sit on their own, and I do not intend to privilege any one, nor to argue here that one notion of grace provides more adequate resources than the others for constructing an environmental ethic. I make few comparative remarks, and then for purposes of distinction rather than evaluation.

Some readers may therefore find it useful to read the book in ways other than consecutively. Readers interested in comparing religious and nonreligious environmental ethics could confine themselves to part I. Readers wanting to make sense of the pluralism in environmental ethics could simply read chapter 2. Readers interested in a survey of Christian environmental ethics could read chapters 3, 4, and 5. To fully understand how that survey works, those chapters should be read with chapter 2, but need not engage the theological investigations of the second part. Readers interested in a particular Christian strategy or tradition of grace might choose to read its description in part one and the two corresponding theological chapters in part two (e.g., for ecojustice, read chapters 4, 6 and 7). Those interested in an environmental reading of Thomas, Barth, or Bulgakov could read only the two chapters devoted to each, perhaps looking over the survey chapter describing the Christian strategy in need of theological assistance. So, one might read Bulgakov in concert with chapter 5, which explains why ecological spiritualities should turn to Bulgakov, and what to ask him.

Reinhabiting Theology

In addition to recent work in Africa, I have a second personal reason for mapping a novel path into Christian environmental ethics, and for then spending so much time working with the theologians of part II. We will see in chapter 2 that a number of scholars and activists have begun to criticize the practical scope of secular environmental strategies. They worry that the field's standard frameworks fail to address the full range of environmental problems—not just pollution and species preservation, but sustainable development, regional planning, ecological restoration, building design, agriculture, and environmental injustice. We will see in the following chapters that Christian environmental strategies tend to follow the broad outline of the secular strategies, which in light of the criticisms should give pause. But because they do so by drawing on background patterns of grace (even if obliquely), the Christian strategies transform the secular strategies they follow, sometimes generating uniquely useful ways of incorporating a wider scope of environmental issues into a coherent account of moral experience. Mapping Christian environmental ethics in a new way can therefore illuminate practical theological resources with potential to reorient and reinvigorate public discussion of neglected environmental issues.

My own family background includes a contested history with some of those nonstandard environmental problems. My grandmother witnessed her family's forced eviction from their mountainside farm of several hundred acres in order to make room for the ecological restoration project known as the Shenandoah National Park. Up until a few years ago, my family farmed along the base of Old Rag Mountain, planting apple and peach trees along an uneasy border with the park. On Sundays my grandparents would sometimes walk the hiking trails in order to remember the names of those whose homesteads and gravesites were being overgrown.[62] (Picture my grandfather in his Sunday overalls talking about corn and cabbage fields while hikers in recreational gear pass by.)

In some ways my grandparents lived sustainably, almost self-sufficiently; they had a dairy cow, a few dozen unconfined hogs, some laying hens, a winter's worth of potatoes, and a huge garden—its produce variously canned, frozen, dried, and preserved. They had gravity-fed water, woodstove heat, and their own timber lots. In other ways my grandparents fell victim to unsustainable myths. They faithfully bought the offerings of postwar agrotechnology, from a WWII-surplus bulldozer to market-selected tree varieties to the latest pesticides.[63] Wildlife decreased while cancers burgeoned. In the span of their lives the orchard flourished, faltered, and then failed, as even chemical heroism could not make the land keep pace with the globalizing produce trade. When

the Jenkins Apple Orchard finally closed to the public, only three of the county's thirty-two family-run orchards remained.

When my grandparents died, they were buried thirty miles away, in another county, for they feared the park would someday seize more land, and they did not want their bodies to become part of the federal overgrowth! And in a way the park has grown since then. The government has not expanded its borders, nor do hikers yet walk through their abandoned homestead, but the overgrown orchard now welcomes Shenandoah's citizens: bear, coyote, bobcats, beavers, and deer (all once pests) now move across the less adversarial border. Vacation cabins sprout along the park's environs, and exotic property values slowly push out native dwellers. Increasingly the park, rather than farming, shapes the county's rural landscape.

Making sense of living in this part of the Virginian piedmont means making sense of global economics, rural history, American notions of wilderness, sustainability, environmental justice, and ecological restoration. My grandparents made sense of living there by a hearty Baptist faith, which gave thanks for the land's bounty, and bounded greed by gratitude to the Creator and pride by indebtedness to the blood of the Lamb. There were resources in their lived faith for deeper theologies of the land—in Grandma's copious offerings to the great potluck celebrations of local food, in Grandpa's refusal to work on the Sabbath (despite ripe peaches falling from the trees), and in their spiritual satisfaction with a humble life made in a small community on a mountain foothill. But I doubt they ever heard a sermon link thanksgiving and sustainable harvests, or spiritual health and land health, or redemption and ecological integrity. In that absence they were failed by a church that had no ears to hear the scriptures speak to inhabiting this promised place. Insofar as its notion of life with God could not live into the story of the land, the church read its scriptures, preached its sermons, planned its missions, and baptized its members by landless, unsustainable theologies.

Those questions still face the members of our county churches. My family holds on to a portion of farmland adjacent to the park, undecided what do with it. Like others of the many private managers of the Shenandoah Park's buffer zone, we receive advice from conservation organizations, hunting groups, property developers, loggers, and hobby farmers. Meanwhile, the park has begun renovating its relations with those living along its borders, present and past, by asking for citizen help in restoring ecological health and in restoring historical names to seized lands. More than ever, our county managers face decisions about stewarding the land within a changing rural economy. The remaining farm families must decide what it means to farm well, what sufficiency and sustainability look like in a changing landscape and market. So what ethical resources can this community draw on for thinking through these issues?

For many of the participants in these decisions, relevant ethical resources must come in a vocabulary native to their lived faith. Yet most of our local Christian leaders struggle to articulate land use as a matter of faith or to see environmental issues within the Christian story. This book returns environmental ethics to the roots of major Christian traditions to show where they might find practical resources for understanding the way environmental problems matter for Christian identity, community, and experience. And although most of what follows would be unrecognizable to my grandparents' way of putting things religious, I aim to nourish a new shoot from my own roots, hoping to rediscover how to live at home on Old Rag Mountain. Taking a cue from the Christian environmentalisms I have encountered in Africa and Asia, I turn specifically to the traditions of grace.