



BRILL

EXCHANGE 48 (2019) 73-82

EXCHANGE

brill.com/exch

Book Reviews



Celia Deane-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann and Markus Vogt (eds),
Religion in the Anthropocene. Eugene OR, 2017, Wipf and Stock Publishers. 338 pp.
ISBN 978-1-4982-9191-0 (paperback). Price: 40 USD.

Research in human sciences regarding global environmental challenges, such as climate change, has grown in recent decades. The anthology *Religion in the Anthropocene* is however a landmark volume of essays. It brings together theologians, historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and ethicists critically analysing the broad geological concept of the Anthropocene. The term has been debated extensively in academia since it was popularized in 2000. The Anthropocene defines the most recent geological era in earth's history when humanity dominates the global environment.

I perceive that the overall purpose of the book is to broaden the original framing of Anthropocene as natural-science phenomena, and to critically analyse the relationship between religion and the Anthropocene as concept and era. It is difficult to make an accurate summary, as the seventeen essays constitute such a plurality of perspectives and richness of sharp analysis. In the foreword, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm describes the authors of the anthology as pathfinders. This reflects very well the way in which the authors succeed not only in breaking new academic grounds, but also how they approach religion's public and political role. Markus Vogt captures this in an excellent way when he examines both the academic clash between natural sciences and humanities, and religion's involvement in socio-political dialogues.

The essays relate to the relatively new research field of Religion and Development, not least social science research on the role of religion in climate change. But by using tools from human sciences, several of the authors manage to reach existential depths and to highlight the religious connotations of the Anthropocene. Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond and Maria Antonaccio do this in a remarkable way.

Several authors show that the challenges we face in the Anthropocene both require and have enormous potential for cross-border and creative approaches. This emerges clearly when Bergmann view the Anthropocene through the lens of art and poetry, while Bronislaw Szerszynski uses theory-fiction, and Marisa Ronan fiction.

The authors of the anthology do not agree whether the concept of Anthropocene makes academic discussions and human self-reflection possible or complicates these. However a common theme is religion's potential transformative impact, though in a plurality of ways. Among others Marisa Ronan and Michael Northcott state that Christian concepts challenge or already influence political discourses. The anthology thus constitutes an important contribution to the field of research in Public Theology. The authors manage to find paths that unite the local with the global, the transcendent with the political. Not at least in the final part of the book, where Ian Barn's and David Joseph Wellman's analysis ranges from the celebration of the Eucharist in local Christian communities to the meeting-rooms of global diplomatic negotiations.

I hope this anthology will reach readers even outside academia: especially politicians who do not recognize the role of religion in society, but also enable religious practitioners to sharpen their analytical tools, and to ground their self-understanding as vital actors of change in an era of Anthropocene.

The contributors have high ambitions of covering the broad title *Religion in the Anthropocene*. For example, Vogt raises the necessity of a global and cultural pluralistic learning process between academic disciplines, as well as different contexts. But I miss in the volume voices from the south and inter-religious perspectives complementing those of Christian theology. The latter would also contribute to theory development in the field of Public Theology. The Anthropocene both as concept and era, grew and was caused by the global north. However I'm convinced pathfinders of constructive solutions in our era are to be found in a multitude of contexts, including interreligious ones. Therefore I hope for a successor to this excellent volume.

Sofia Oreland
Uppsala Sweden
sofia_oreland@hotmail.com