

Robert McKim, ed.,
Laudato Si' and the Environment: Pope Francis' Green
Encyclical,
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244 hlm.



Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* invites scholars of all sciences to a dialogue on the ecological crisis in order to find better solutions before it is too late. Thus it is not surprising that in this collection of essays twelve scholars in religious and social sciences respond to his much appreciated encyclical. Editor Robert McKim, emeritus professor of Philosophy of Religion at the University of Illinois, opens the discussion with a proposal of inquiry into the challenges posed by the ecological crisis and how the world religions can and have responded to it in providing guidance and inspiration, and in what they have accomplished both as entire religious traditions and on a micro-level through particular religious communities, and also in giving birth to new environmentally constructive practices and rituals.

The rest of the book has been divided into three sections. In chapter 2-7, six authors write about the implementation of several ideas in the encyclical, e.g. concerning rainforest and indigenous religions, private ownership, migration and population growth, treatment of animals. In chapter 8-10, three scholars engage in scriptural, theological and philosophical aspects. In chapter 11-13 another three scholars address some central concepts: an anthropology of interconnectedness, the importance of realities above ideas, and opposition to the 'technocratic paradigm'. From each contribution, a central focus will be mentioned here below.

In the first part, in chapter 2, "*Laudato Si'* and Private Property", Eric T. Freyfogle, research professor at the University of Illinois, examines a wide range of implications when the encyclical connects the institution of private property to the common good of both local, national and global society, earth, and future generations. Thus property owners should have a right to do only what is consistent with an interconnected set of

goals and values, which should be regulated locally, nationally, and internationally. In Chapter 3, “*Reading Laudato Si’* in a Rainforest Country: Ecological Conversion and Recognition of Indigenous Religions”, Zainal Abidin Bagir, Director of the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, observes that saving forests requires saving the people who live there, and also ensuring the continuation of their religious practices. He contends that world religions as Christianity and Islam should build theologies that are more friendly to indigenous beliefs and practices. He considers this to be central to implementing Pope Francis’ idea of ecological conversion.

In chapter 4, “The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor”, Darrel Moellendorf, Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt am Main, considers how we might respond to both cries by a clear recognition of the ecological debt that the global rich owe to the global poor. For that reason, the highly developed industrialized countries should assume full responsibility for the transition to a zero carbon global economy, which should not become a burden for the developing and least developed countries and diminish their prospect for development. In chapter 5, “*Laudato Si’* and Population”, Herman E. Daly, former Senior Economist in the Environment Department of the World Bank (1988-1994), bemoans that the encyclical does not discuss the impact of global growth of human population which quadrupled in a lifetime. His main point however is immigration control. What is needed is kind of a “Marshall Plan” together with refugee resettlement in the least developed countries rather than open borders and mass migration.

In chapter 6, “Rethinking our Treatment of Animals in the Light of *Laudato Si’*”, David Clough, Professor of Theological ethics at the University of Chester UK, criticises the current use of animals for food industry and the industrial scale of animal farming. He highlights some central aspect of how *Laudato Si’* tells us to relate more respectfully to other creatures by avoiding all forms of anthropocentrism and recognizing that all creatures have a place in God’s redemptive work. In chapter 7, “We were nowhere. We’ve got somewhere. Does *Laudato Si’* go far enough, and is

the church on board for the climate journey?", Paddy Woodworth, an Irish author, journalist and lecturer, besides appreciating many aspects in *Laudato Si'* and what has been achieved, regrets with Daly that *Laudato Si'* does not speak about overpopulation as contributor to environmental degradation, and does not clearly specify what action Christians and church institutions should be taking. He also asks whether *Laudato Si'* has already had sufficient impact within the Catholic Church itself.

In Part 2, *Scriptural, Theological and Philosophical aspects*, in chapter 8, "*Laudato Si'* and the reinterpretation of Scripture in the light of the ecological crisis", Margaret Daly-Denton, an Irish Scripture Scholar, places Pope Francis' reading of the bible in a more ecological sensitive way in the wider context and history of "ecological hermeneutics" which is seen as part of the wider practice of faithful reading of the bible in the light of current realities. In chapter 9, "Sources of Authority in *Laudato Si'*", Theologian Cristina L. H. Traina (North-western University, Illinois, USA) discusses how Pope Francis makes use of four sources of authority (scripture, church documents, theology, and science). She appreciates the decentralized use of documents, not only the usual papal documents but also those from bishops conferences, often about the poor, but not those from the poor themselves. The pope's reading of scripture is a more contemplative and personal encounter with the text rather than based on universally authoritative scholarship. This attitude would explain why only male theologians, philosophers, and cultural critics are cited where also female authors could have been cited but never are. In chapter 10, "A Constructive Engagement with *Laudato Si'*", Kieran P. Donaghy, Professor of Regional Science and Economic Development at Cornell University (Ithaca, New York), appreciates Pope Francis' aspiration to address a broad audience in "a conversation which includes everyone." From there he explores a body of reasoning that can be joined in by everyone because it does not build on the perspective of any particular religious or philosophical tradition. Such a "constructive approach" starts from general assumptions that lead to actions, and can yield prescriptive conclusions that he sees as close to what has been advocated by Pope Francis.

In Part 3, *Central concepts*, chapter 11, “A New Anthropology? *Laudato Si’* and the Question of Interconnectedness,” theologian Celia Deane-Drummond, director of the *Laudato Si’* Research Institute in Oxford UK, explores implications of the idea of interconnectedness in *Laudato Si’* for our thinking about the significance of being human. Combined with the importance given to indigenous perspectives by the encyclical, she contends that an adequate Catholic Theological approach to being human must combine its traditional emphasis on human dignity and uniqueness with a new appreciation of insights from anthropology about indigenous perspectives on being human. In chapter 12, “‘Realities are More Important than Ideas’ (LS 110): The Significance of Practice in *Laudato Si’*,” Gretel van Wieren, Professor of Religious Studies and Environmental Philosophy at Michigan State University, examines some aspects (pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity) in which practice and lived experience (e.g. from the poor) are incorporated in the responses of the encyclical. In chapter 13, “Opposing the ‘technocratic paradigm’ and ‘appreciating the small things’,” editor McKim looks at what *Laudato Si’* has coined as the ‘technocratic paradigm’ with its relentless pursuit of profit and its tendency of letting technology dictate how we conduct ourselves. The best way to oppose this ‘technocratic paradigm’ would be by always taking account of the value of other humans, creatures, ecosystems, and forbidding to deal with them without being guided by their intrinsic value.

These responses to *Laudato Si’* by twelve scholars from three continents are of course far more comprehensive than could be presented here. Although still far from complete, these are very meaningful responses to be pondered on, both where they support and further elaborate Pope Francis’ observations and proposals, as well as when they are critical of what has not yet been taken into account or accomplished. Such responses are what the encyclical has been asking for. The discussion has to become wider and deeper in order to achieve a fuller and all-inclusive vision of solutions to the crisis of our common home (*Martin Harun, OFM, Guru besar emeritus, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara, Jakarta*)