

Julia Enxing, *Und Gott sah, dass es schlecht war. Warum uns der christliche Glaube verpflichtet, die Schöpfung zu bewahren* (Kösel-Verlag: Munich 2022).

We are encountering climate crisis with all its consequences more and more frequently. As I write this review, parts of Spain, France and Italy, for example, are drying out, Vietnam (and other places) are experiencing record temperatures, and climate activists in Germany are gluing themselves to the streets in order to get their government to abide by this country's very own laws and implement climate protection measures. Theologically, climate crisis is also increasingly coming into focus and eco-theological as well as environmental-ethical approaches are on the rise. The so-called environmental encyclical "Laudato sí" addresses Catholic Christians worldwide and urges respect also for non-human creation, which involves an end to the exploitation of our fellow world. In Germany, the EKD issued a climate protection directive in September 2022 and aims to become greenhouse gas neutral by 2035. In this context, Julia Enxing's book "Und Gott sah, dass es schlecht war" is a book of the hour. The author takes a hard look at us (and at herself), without ever becoming lecturing or arrogant.

In the introduction, Enxing explains how her experiences with her own and other animals have influenced her, and which questions with regard to God, creation and our environment move her. The first chapter is then a presentation of creation-theological and related anthropological foundations on the basis of biblical texts. It is refreshing that Enxing does not limit herself to the two creation reports (even if the main focus is on these), but also looks into the Psalms and the Book of Job for the positioning of humankind in creation and the significance of the world around us. The following four chapters revolve around four basic questions: "Why we must (not) exploit the earth", "Why everything was (not) better in the past", "Why we (not) have more rights than other creatures", "Why it can (not) go on like this". These individual chapters can be read and understood independently. Enxing writes less linearly and

sequentially, but treats her overriding guiding theme – commitment to our fellow world as a task of also and especially Christians – from different perspectives and with a view to different aspects, without shying away from one or the other repetition.

Overall, Enxing's focus is placed strongly on questions of animal ethics. It is therefore not directly and primarily about saving CO<sub>2</sub>. This is rather a secondary consequence of a lifestyle in which one shows solidarity with people in the poor regions of our world, but also with animals as our fellow creatures. Therefore, the book does not provide comprehensive information on climate change and its various facets either.

Enxing's book is not a reference book, but is aimed at the general public. The language is easily accessible, technical terms are explained, and inclusive writing is elegantly integrated into the writing for an uninterrupted reading flow. Enxing waves to take a detached view of her topic and writes as a person affected by it. This is made clear both by the biographical accounts that are repeatedly interwoven as well as by her reflection on her own life situation and her own entanglement in an environmentally damaging system. In all of this, she is concerned not only with appealing to the intellect of her readers, but also to their feelings and their conscience.

For her purpose, Enxing omits the euphemisms to which we have become accustomed and names our treatment of our fellow world, especially of farm animals, unsparingly and directly (see for example her descriptions of her internship and of her experiences when accompanying a veterinarian friend, as well as the following information, p. 88-95). Likewise, she expresses her appreciation for our fellow animal creatures also linguistically by for example speaking of animals as individuals (cf. p. 12) and granting each of them, among other things, a character of their own (cf. p. 104). Cynics may see this as anthropomorphism, but in fact her linguistic approach seems to be closer to the state of science than some of us would like.

If one gets involved in the style of the book, one finds – of course only if one shares the basic assumptions – actually not much that could be criticised. One or the other theological question may be seen differently. What does come up short in the book is an indication that we as political subjects do have power, too, and can push for a difference, not only through elections, but also by actively addressing political representatives, through signed petitions, demonstrations, and protests of all kinds. With all of the discussion about one's own responsibilities and life choices, this would be a good empowering moment to point the reader to action not only but also for questions of animal welfare.

In the end, however, what makes this book so strong is that it challenges less an intellectual debate with the author, but much more a debate with oneself, with one's own view of creation as well as of one's fellow world, and with one's own behaviour.

Enxing's book is tough and daring. It addresses realities that we all too readily forget, ignore or minimize. It thus challenges our usual defense mechanisms. Ultimately, the big questions in and behind her text are: who do we want to be and who are we if we are honest with ourselves? A popular argument for avoiding changes in one's own life is that the behaviour of an individual has no meaning anyway. Be that as it may. As Christians, we are addressed by God as individuals. We all have to answer individually. As co-creators we also have a responsibility for our fellow world.

As a Catholic theologian, Enxing of course writes from a Catholic perspective and also repeatedly refers to magisterial positions. Nevertheless, her book is by no means addressed only to Catholics, and it can be read with profit by Christians of other denominations as well as by people interested in faith and theology. For the questions she raises and discusses concern us all. So, anyone who wants to come to terms with their own approach to creation and wants to explore their own sphere of responsibility is warmly recommended to get engaged with her book.

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