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BOOK REVIEW

Rayappa A. Kasi, *Earth–Designed For Biodiversity: Life will Find a Way*, Chennai: LTD Media Publications, 2010. Pages: 1-4 + i-viii + 374.

The work, *Earth–Designed For Biodiversity: Life will Find a Way*, is published on the occasion of the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity 2010 with an appeal to save life on earth and life of earth. The author of this book is a Catholic priest from Kattupadi, Tamil Nadu, India.

The book attempts to explore the scientific, religious and moral perspectives on the meaning of biodiversity and the need to save life on earth focusing on the understanding of some of the prominent scientists, philosophers and theologians along with scriptural support. Rayappa deserves congratulations on choosing such an important theme for study especially in the context of an emerging eco-philosophy.

The work is divided into seven chapters with an introduction titled “The Beginning” which introduces the subject matter of the book pointing out man’s responsibility towards the dying planet earth.

In chapter one, “The Story of Life from Monday to Saturday,” the author brings to the attention of the reader the situation of life in the field of Biodiversity while shedding much light on the scientific findings with regard to the whole process of evolution. According to the author what is required is a sacrifice on the part of each individual that can create new possibilities for our planet and Bio-diversity.

Chapter two under the title, “The Kingdom of Life is the Kingdom of God,” makes an attempt to look at the planet earth, a complete living, breathing, swarming, thriving kingdom of life as a gift from God which the author compares to the ideal of the Kingdom of God in the Biblical understanding.

The third chapter, “Life Will Find a Way,” centres its discussion on planet earth itself which is a form of life and is very much alive. It further takes up the amazing discussions on DNA, natural selection, sexual selection and an eco-psychology for a new environmental revolution. The author’s insight,

"the deeper you go into life, the more you understand the immortality—the resurrection—within you," is really fascinating. For him we are not human beings who are after spirituality, but rather spiritual beings who are after humanity, becoming human (p.105) in the process. The author supplies the reader with a few tips for understanding things we cannot change and things that can be changed in our approach to life.

"An Appeal to Save Life on Earth," chapter four, points out the danger of the dying Earth and the need to save it as human responsibility by the protection of diversity, habitats and all ecosystems. The author cautions the reader that harming the earth is harming ourselves. He invites the reader to affirm the sacredness of life and respect it by adopting to vegetarianism.

Chapter five, "Planet Earth is Designed for Biodiversity," establishes the immense diversity on earth that can be saved by a number of programmes. The author also focuses on marine biodiversity and affirms that the sacred depths of Nature is designed by God. This chapter concludes with a very positive approach by presenting an account of the miracle of human life.

The sixth chapter, "War on Biodiversity and Extinctions," provides facts about the Biodiversity loss due to man's war on Biodiversity. The author presents the basic attitude towards the Gaia-Mother Earth as one of moral reverence. We are called to be good Samaritans—moral persons and to be good investors in conservation. The sense of such a moral conscience and relatedness evokes a greater reverence for the mother earth and ecology. Such an outlook paves the philosophical grounding for a more existential and moral ecology.

The final chapter of the book, "Life Yet to Come," glimpses on the future life of Earth with its millions of species and myriad ecosystems. While delineating our aspirations for future life the author presents the top ten reasons to care for creation, seven sacraments of ecology with the guiding light of faith for the avatar of conservation following the Sermon on the Mount, the Magna Carta of sustainable development. According to the author the inheritors of this planet have to work hard to conserve, preserve and restore through restoring Habitats, Communities and Relationships.

This important book could have benefited from better copyediting. There are printer's devils and methodological inconsistencies. The use of very small font size and unscientific margin settings make the text less reader-friendly. Separating the footnotes from each other with a straight line seems to be unscientific. No care is given to the pagination of the text. Hence it begins

with Arabic numbers, then shifts to Roman numerals, and finally continues with Arabic numbers. Within the chapters at times themes are presented in an unorganized manner which hinders the flow of reading. The book suffers also from the repetition of ideas and the use of scriptural text at times out of the context and without any attempt to blend them with the concerned topics. Some (un)scientific hypothetical calculations and their deterministic nature kill the value of certain discussions.

In spite of some such limitations, the book creates an interest in the mind of the reader to wonder at this beautiful earth and all things in it including the mystery of the human person. It helps the reader unravel the mysterious ways of Nature at work and to care for it as the Gaia. The author deserves appreciation for leading the reader to greater heights of awareness about the value of life in all its forms and the need to approach it with a deep sense of reverence. I wish the book wide readership and thus wide support for the care, conservation, preservation and restoration of life in all its forms.

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