Evangelical ecotheology:  
How the resurrection entails creation care

Abstract

This article advocates evangelical environmental care by grounding an ethic of nature at the centre of evangelical theology, namely, in Christ and his resurrection. As Paul points out in 1 Cor.15, the continuity between our earthly bodies and our resurrected bodies entails that we should take care of our bodies. Drawing on Rom. 8, I argue that the same line of reasoning applies to nature: the continuity between creation and the new creation entails that we should take care of nature. Finally, I consider some objections to my argument regarding its possible eschatological consequences.

# EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY AND CREATION CARE

Evangelical theology is Christ-centred theology.[[1]](#footnote-2) This is how Stanley Grenz defines it, and he is not alone in doing so. Kevin Vanhoozer says evangelical theology is a theology whose goal is to know the God of the Gospel.[[2]](#footnote-3) According to John Stott, it is a theology in which the highest authority is Christ and the biblical witness to him.[[3]](#footnote-4) Alister McGrath defines it by quoting Luther, who states that evangelical theology is a theology where Christ alone is the means, the life, and the mirror through which we see God and know his will.[[4]](#footnote-5) Thus, the nature of evangelical theology – having Christ as its foundation and goal – must determine its method. This is not to say that evangelical theology and ethics should limit itself to only one source of theology, namely Christ. Rather, evangelical theology and ethics should be carried out in a Christ-centred manner. In this article, I ground creation care in a way that fits well with the Christ-centred gist of evangelical theology, arguing in favour of an environmental ethic that takes as its starting point the resurrection of Jesus.

While creation care is not a major theme in evangelical theology and is not covered in overview books on trends in evangelical theology[[5]](#footnote-6) (although Daniel Treier’s book, *Introducing Evangelical Theology,* has one page on the topic)[[6]](#footnote-7), it is not an absent theme, either. There is a history of evangelical contributions to creation care, stretching from John Wesley, who preached God’s care for all living beings.[[7]](#footnote-8) What I want to draw attention to here is how creation care is grounded within evangelical theology, namely, primarily in creation theology. This is true for both Norman Geisler’s and Stott’s books on ethics; the work of McGrath;[[8]](#footnote-9) and books connected to the Lausanne movement, such as *Creation Care and the Gospel* and Ed Brown’s *Our Father’s World*.[[9]](#footnote-10) Treier’s *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* devotes only seven pages tohow Christ might motivate creation care.[[10]](#footnote-11) *The Care of Creation,* which focuses on the 1994 *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*, leaves some room for Christology.[[11]](#footnote-12) In the first part of the book, which explains the context of the declaration, the incarnation comes into play. However, in the second part of the book, which includes contributions by scholars, Christology is practically absent – even among evangelical voices such as those of Oliver O’Donovan and McGrath, and even in contributions by NT experts such as Howard Marshall and Richard Bauckham. Thus, with some exceptions – such as the book *Creation Care* by Moo and Moo[[12]](#footnote-13) – evangelical ecotheology tends to be dominated by creation theology and occasionally supplemented by NT theology. This seems to be true not only among theologians but also among churchgoers. Sociologists have also noticed that evangelicals typically encourage creation care in creation theology and with notions such as stewardship.[[13]](#footnote-14)

Evangelical theologians are not alone in grounding creation care primarily in creation theology. Bauckham states that ‘Few of those who have written about the ecological dimension of the Bible have found much to say about the Synoptic Gospels.’[[14]](#footnote-15) This observation might not be surprising – Old Testament (OT) texts and themes are more easily available for constructing an ethic of nature than NT texts.[[15]](#footnote-16) However, there are some problems with an ecotheology drawn mostly from the OT and hardly from the NT. Not only are some viable theological resources missed, but it is also theologically problematic to formulate an ecotheology without a proper Christological basis within a theological system that insists on being Christologically determined.

I will now outline a way of justifying environmental commitment that fits well with evangelical theology, namely, an environmental ethic that takes as its starting point the resurrection of Jesus. There are three reasons why I want to anchor nature ethics here. By starting from the resurrection of Jesus, I place natural ethics at the core of evangelical theology, which many other evangelical ethics of nature do not do. Second, I believe, as O’Donovan argues in *Resurrection and the Moral Order*, that the resurrection has ethical implications that should be made visible in Christian ethics. In this article, I argue that the resurrection is a viable ecotheological resource. Third, I believe that the resurrection means that we see both the world and the biblical texts with new eyes. It is through Christ that we will see nature for what it is.[[16]](#footnote-17) There are, of course, other justifications for nature ethics. For instance, evangelical scholars have grounded ecotheology in NT eschatology, which is a major theme in evangelical theology.[[17]](#footnote-18) Grounding ecotheology in this and other parts of theology is useful but not sufficient, as all parts of theology need to be interpreted and determined from a Christological perspective – and here, the resurrection has a decisive significance.

# RESURRECTION IMPLIES CONTINUITY

My argument for the presence of environmental care in evangelical theology assumes that eschatology is relevant to ethics. A recurring theme in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians concerns how the future kingdom of God, the eschatological reality, should be a model for the present reality.[[18]](#footnote-19) Paul presents several ethical and practical matters and draws an arrow from eschatology to the present: that we shall reach for what is not yet and that God’s future kingdom of heaven says something about how we should live here and now.

Grounding environmental care in eschatology is not new. Some scholars have shown how the OT theme of the Day of the Lord involves a renewal of creation (as in Is. 34–35) and, given this OT background, have argued that Jesus’ announcement of the coming of the kingdom has ecological implications.[[19]](#footnote-20) Other scholars have argued that the OT theme of return to the land and the blessing of the land is expanded in the NT, in which the eschatological fulfilment involves the whole world, as a cosmic fall (Rom. 8:19–22) meets a cosmic restoration (Col. 1:20).[[20]](#footnote-21) Thus, scholars have connected eschatology and environmental care effectively. My contribution is to ground environmental care not in eschatology but in Christ and his resurrection (which, of course, have eschatological significance). There are some advantages to this approach. First, Christ and his resurrection are more at the core of evangelical theology than eschatology. Second, the continuity between the present creation and the new creation, on which is hinged my argument for creation care, is most clearly demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ. Third, the normative claim that one should care for the present creation because there will be a renewal can be strengthened when Pauline texts on the resurrection are referred to.

Turning to Paul’s writing on the resurrection, in 1 Cor. 15, he argues that there is a resurrection and explains what such a resurrection entails. He begins by establishing that Jesus has actually risen: that Jesus died, rose and appeared to many hundreds of people, most of whom were still alive. Paul then asks (v. 12) how anyone can say that there is no resurrection from the dead, after which he draws a line from Jesus’ resurrection to a collective resurrection: Christ has risen from the dead as the first fruit. Therefore, in Christ, one gets a foretaste of what awaits those who belong to Christ: the resurrection. Chapter 15 thus mainly argues that there is a future bodily resurrection by pointing out that Christ himself rose (vv. 1–11) and that denying the resurrection has absurd consequences (vv. 12–19, 29–34).[[21]](#footnote-22)

In the middle of 1 Cor. 15, Paul turns his attention to how the resurrection grounds Christian moral effort. What I want to draw attention to is how his line of reasoning implies the moral imperative that we should take care of our bodies. The point that the resurrection grounds Christian moral effort, specifically moral effort concerning how we treat our bodies, is also present in 1 Cor 6. There, the question is why Christians should not engage in sexual immorality (v. 18). Paul points to the eschaton, stating that Christians must have their eyes fixed on the future, towards inheriting God’s kingdom (vv. 9–10). Furthermore, Paul points to the resurrection: ‘The body is meant not for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power’ (vv. 13–14). Because of the resurrection, our future union with God has ethical implications for how we treat our bodies now; it is our present body, which will be raised, that is ‘meant for the Lord’.[[22]](#footnote-23) The same line of reasoning is present in 1 Cor. 15:32. Here, Paul reproduces a reasoning from Corinth: ‘If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’ So, if there is no resurrection, we can live as we want to without thinking about tomorrow.[[23]](#footnote-24) Paul is not convinced: ‘Sober up!’ (v. 34) Paul rejects that reasoning because he is convinced that the dead willrise. Whether Paul has gluttony or carousing in mind when talking about eating and drinking, his point is that we cannot abandon our bodies to whatever pleasures we might fancy; what we do in the body is of ethical and eternal significance. Now, I take Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 6 and 15 to imply a more general moral demand, namely that we should take care of our bodies. This general moral demand fits the overall gist of Paul's line of argument: Resurrection means that our life and our body will continue into eternity, and therefore, we should not be indifferent to how we live and how we treat our bodies. Moreover, the specific cases of sexual immorality, gluttony, and carousing can all be seen as specific cases of taking care of the body.

What gives weight to the moral imperative of taking care of our body is the continuity between our present body and our future body, ensured by the resurrection. Some scholars have questioned this continuity,[[24]](#footnote-25) arguing that Paul strictly separates our earthly body from our resurrection body by writing that a perishable body is sown, but an imperishable body is raised (v. 42). The seed that is sown is completely different from the plant that rises, so Paul’s metaphor suggests that our resurrection body is very different from our earthly body. If there is a strict delineation between our earthly body and our resurrection body, then, how we treat our body would perhaps not pose so much risk, as it will, in any case, pass away in favour of a new body.[[25]](#footnote-26) In my opinion, however, the case for a strict delineation between our earthly body and our resurrection body is weak.[[26]](#footnote-27) There are clear differences between these two bodies – one is weak, and the other is glorious – but they still show continuity. Paul did not seem to think that our earthly body will be replaced by a heavenly body, such that our earthly body will be destroyed and another will be created in its place, but that it will ‘be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet’ (vv. 51–52). Continuity and transformation also underlie Paul’s metaphor on the seed that is sown and sprouts: the seed is not replaced by a plant but is transformed into a plant.[[27]](#footnote-28) Such a transformation implies that our new body will really stand out as new but will also have continuity with the old.

This transformation of our body, a transformation that implies both continuity and true newness, is also clearly present in the Gospel accounts of the encounters with the resurrected Christ. Christ’s body is the same body that hung on the cross, lay in the tomb, and suddenly stood before the disciples. The nail marks and the empty tomb attest to his body’s continuity. However, the difficulty of Christ’s recognition attests that his body is truly new (Lk 24:16; Jn 20:14). Moreover, while he has an apparently normal physical body that can eat and drink (Lk 24:39 ff.), he also has a body that suddenly appears and disappears (Lk 24:31, 36). Due to this combination of familiar bodily features and new and unfamiliar features, N. T. Wright referred to the resurrection body as ‘trans-physical’ in that the new body cannot be described as non-physical but transcends the physical.[[28]](#footnote-29)

So far, I have argued that Paul uses the idea that what is to come (eschatology) has implications for how we should live now (ethics), that we can know what is to come through Jesus Christ and his resurrection, that the resurrection entails continuity between what is now and what is to come and that this continuity has the ethical implication that it matters how we treat our body. What I will now show is that the same ethical argument can be applied to nature: just as the hope of a glorified body implies that we must take care of our body, the hope of a glorified creation implies that we must take care of creation now.

In Rom. 8, Paul writes once again about the resurrection. His main point here is to encourage people to persist in their current suffering by reminding them of the glory that awaits them.[[29]](#footnote-30) However, Paul does not limit himself to writing about how humanity will be liberated from corruption; he also writes about how creation will be liberated.[[30]](#footnote-31) Just as the human being is subject to futility and must be freed, so also creation is subject to futility and must be freed (vv. 20–21). Paul, therefore, writes not only about man’s hope for redemption but also about the entire creation’s hope for redemption. The parallel descriptions of human beings and nature are striking. As there is hope for people who are in Christ, there is also hope for the rest of creation. Just as people are to be freed, so also will creation ‘receive the freedom that God’s children shall possess in glory’ (v. 21). Moreover, just as creation groans (v. 22), so too do those who have received the Spirit and long to become children of God fully and completely (v. 23). Although Paul’s focus is primarily on humanity’s salvation, salvation is not only for human beings. The fate of nature and the fate of humanity are woven together.[[31]](#footnote-32) The fall of humanity had consequences for all creation,[[32]](#footnote-33) and in the same way, the salvation of God’s people has consequences for all creation (v. 21). Salvation is a cosmic salvation, a salvation that reverses and surpasses the fall’s consequences for both man and nature – which more and more evangelicals are opening their eyes to.[[33]](#footnote-34)

This short passage in Rom. 8 is frequently cited in ecotheological literature. Stating that creation shares the hope of God’s children has ecological significance in itself. Now, when the passage is read in light of the resurrection texts, it makes for a stronger ecotheological statement than other readings. Take, for instance, NT scholar Brendan Byrne’s ecological reading of Rom. 8.[[34]](#footnote-35) He read it in light of the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology of two ages: the ‘present age’ and the ‘age to come’. In Paul’s writing, these ages overlap — by the spirit, believers already live the life of the new age, but their bodily existence is still anchored in the present age. A strength of this reading is that the passage in Rom. 8 does not appear as a digression; just as believers living a bodily life experience the opposing tugs of those two ages, so does the rest of creation. However, the normative implications are not clear. Byrne shows the ethical relevance of eschatology by arguing that living in the ‘overlap of the ages’ calls for a life in the present age with the values of the new: ‘believers must live a life of “obedience”’ (Rom. 6:1–7:6).[[35]](#footnote-36) It might be true that a life of obedience involves creation care, but this eschatological reading of Rom. 8 does not make that connection. The focus of the text is fundamentally theocentric; it does not state that humans have any role in bringing creation into freedom and glory.[[36]](#footnote-37) However, when the passage is read in light of the resurrection, the connection is made explicit — the resurrection of Jesus attests to bodily continuity, and 1 Cor. 15 shows that this continuity has ethical implications. In Rom. 8, nature’s hope of salvation is the same as that of humanity: a hope of continuity between what is and what is to come and a hope of being set free (v. 21) rather than being destroyed and replaced. When Rom. 8 is read in light of the resurrection, the hope of creation provides normative implications: in the same way as the hope of continuity of the body in 1 Cor.15 gives reason to care for the body, the hope of continuity of creation in Rom. 8 gives reason to care for nature.[[37]](#footnote-38)

# IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLIED ETHICS

Until this point, I have argued that resurrection implies creation care without explicating the content of this creation care. Just as Paul might say that we should care for our body by what food we eat without specifying which food, I have argued that we should care for creation without specifying by which means we should do so. While motivating creation care is significant in itself, the resurrection not only motivates but also influences the content of creation care. Now, some have argued that the eschatological hope cannot inform our applied ethics. The evangelical theologian Stephen Williams argues that the eschatological hope cannot serve as a model for creation care because our knowledge of the eschatological future is vague and limited.[[38]](#footnote-39) Others have raised a similar concern, pointing out that the eschatological reality is so different from the present reality – such as a peaceful coexistence of lions and lambs or Jesus’ teaching that there will be no marriage in the eschaton – that it is unclear to what degree practical ethical implications can be drawn from eschatology.[[39]](#footnote-40) I agree that these concerns put limits on the scope and precision of what ethical content can be drawn from the eschatological reality. However, my aim in this article is not to draw ethical implications from eschatology as such but from belief in the resurrection. The resurrection, specifically the continuity and the transformation involved, provides normative reasons relevant for concrete ethical deliberation that are both sufficiently clear and applicable to life in the present age.

Let me indicate a couple of ways the resurrection can shape the content of our creation care. First, the shared hope of continuity should inform how we view and relate to creation. The shared hope reveals that our relationship with fellow creatures has eternal significance; we are all creatures who share the hope of being fit for worship in the eschaton. Just as Paul argues that eschatological union has implications for marital union, the future union with all of creation implies that we should not estrange ourselves from creation here and now. Second, the transformational aspect of the resurrection provides normative reasons that should guide our practical deliberation. Resurrection sets in motion transformational events which await final completion. It not only restores nature but makes it new. This transformation gives reason to put greater normative weight on cultivation than preservation. Let me expand on this second point by considering care for wildlife, the livestock industry, and farming.

A Creation care motivated primarily by creation theology, emphasising the order of God’s creation, could favour a practical ethic dominated by preservation. When Richard Fern warns against domesticating the wild, he argues that both predators and prey ought to be allowed to live the lives to which they are suited by their nature. As rabbits, antelopes, and other prey animals would “cease to be the animals they are apart from a vulnerability to predation,”[[40]](#footnote-41) Fern calls for an ethic of nature that preserves natural wildlife. Now, resurrection is more than a restoration of the natural. The resurrection affirms the old while also transforming it, not bringing the world back to the Garden of Eden but towards a better future. Consequentially, the resurrection implies an ethic that goes beyond mere preservation, namely an ethic driven by cultivation rather than preservation. An applied ethic driven by cultivation welcomes not only cultivating cities, parks, and farms, which is not that controversial, but also cultivating plants, domesticating some animals, and domesticating some zones of wild nature. Such domestication is not primarily driven by the value of preserving the natural but by the value of ensuring flourishing, which is the main concern of cultivation. So, an attitude towards wildlife driven by cultivation gives a positive view of not only wildlife refuges but also some animal sanctuaries and zoos. This is not to support the view that biological diversity and animal extinction should be addressed solely through preservation, as if one could fight animal extinction merely by preserving members of species in zoos.[[41]](#footnote-42) The point is rather that the resurrection, being a transformational event, brings in other normative concerns than preservation. Restoring and upholding ecosystems in the wilderness is one way creation might flourish, but creation might flourish by other means as well.

Shifting the focus from wildlife to the livestock industry, an industry which often addresses the need for sustainability, we also see how thinking in terms of cultivation is different from thinking in terms of sustainability. Reading Ex. 23:12, we might wonder exactly why we should not treat the oxen too hard. One answer could be that it is not sustainable to do so: we should let the oxen rest so that it produces better work or better meat. In contemporary industrial animal husbandry, sustainability will involve balancing the need for development, the creation of resources and wealth, and the need to protect the environment.[[42]](#footnote-43) While this balance gives some weight to the well-being of the animal, thinking in terms of flourishing gives even greater weight to the well-being of the animal.

Lastly, let me shift the focus from animals to plants. Approaching agriculture with an emphasis on cultivation gives a reason in favour of some use of genetically modified crops, improving plants so that they can flourish in currently unusable environments and endure some of the effects global climate change has on agriculture. Now, to provide a reason in favour of some genetic modification does not grant a blanket acceptance of technological improvement of nature.An ethic informed by the resurrection also gives reason for some restriction on this matter: our shared hope and destiny with creation implies we should not treat nature merely as a means. We should not exercise our dominion over nature just to satisfy our needs and never-ending appetites.

A lot more can be said about the ethics of wildlife, livestock and farming. The reasoning above is simply intended to show that the resurrection not only motivates creation care but can also inform our applied ethics. Now, two things should be said in this regard to avoid being overly ambitious on behalf of the role the resurrection can play in applied ethics. First, while the resurrection encourages cultivation and transformation, it does so within certain boundaries. Resurrection sets in motion transformative events, but the full transformation awaits in the eschaton. This inaugurated eschatology gives reason to engage in modest work of transformation to improve creations' health and ﬂourishing rather than trying to transcend the created order.[[43]](#footnote-44) So, when considering ethical issues of wildlife and animal extinction, these issues should not be seen through the lens of an over-realised eschatology. Human attempts at altering ecosystems or food chains would likely prove disastrous for the ecological dynamics. Making the wolf and the lamb feed together is something only God can do – something which awaits final completion in the eschaton. Second, as eschatology is not the only source of knowledge to discern the will of God, the resurrection alone cannot delineate the content of creation care. Consequently, while an evangelical ethic of creation care should appeal to the resurrection, it requires more than that. Now, the resurrection is no stranger to the convergence of different theological sources. In the resurrection, creation and eschatology come together as the resurrection affirms rather than negates creation. The resurrection is also a Christological event, both as an affirmation of the life of Christ and as an event where Christ is the firstfruits of what is to come (1 Cor 15:23). While the eschatological kingdom of God shows God’s will for his creation, it is the life and person of Christ that reveals what it looks like to live as inhabitants of the kingdom in anticipation of the eschaton. So, in an evangelical ethic of creation care, all these theological sources should work in tandem. The resurrection provides normative reasons that guide our ethical deliberation, but so does creation theology and the life of Christ. Given that Christian theology is a coherent system of beliefs, these different sources will often provide normative reasons that coincide. However, insofar as the resurrection is an original event not anticipated in the created order, it may also make original contributions to applied ethics, providing some new normative reasons not anticipated by creation theology.

# OBJECTION 1: THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED

My argument for creation care has been this: the resurrection of Jesus teaches continuity between creation and the new creation, and this continuity entails that we take care of creation. Now, let me consider some objections to this argument. First, some scholars might object by questioning the continuity. The Christian hope has sometimes been seen as redemption from the earth. Take the view of pre-millennial dispensationalism, a view that has been popular in early American revivalist movements and evangelical circles.[[44]](#footnote-45) According to this view, history consists of different periods (dispensations), and Jesus will return to earth before his thousand-year reign (pre-millennial). There is a temporal kingdom in which Christ reigns for a thousand years, and there is an eternal Kingdom on the new earth, and at the time between these two kingdoms, God will destroy the old earth. This view has implications for creation care. Take, for instance, Dwight L. Moody, a pre-millennial dispensationalist who said, ‘I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said, “Moody, save all you can.”’[[45]](#footnote-46) As this world is headed for inevitable destruction, there is no point in trying to save or heal the wrecked vessel.

One might argue, then, that my case for creation care is not compatible with pre-millennial dispensationalism. That is partly correct. My case for creation care is not compatible with the view that God will destroy his creation. However, my aforementioned treatment of 1 Cor.15 and Rom. 8 strongly suggests that God will not destroy his creation. The dispensationalist may point to biblical texts such as 2 Pet. 3:10 (‘the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed’) to support the view that the earth will be annihilated. While I agree that this text points in that direction, two points need to be made. First, the imagery of fire may point to a cleansing of creation rather than destruction, as in Zech. 13:9 (‘I will put this third into the fire, refine them as one refines silver’) and Mal. 3:2–3 (‘Who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like washers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver’).[[46]](#footnote-47) When texts such as 2 Pet. 3 are read in light of this biblical imagery of fire, as well as in light of fire being a symbol of God’s power and holiness (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29), the texts might suggest destruction but do not entail it. This is how John Calvin read such texts, arguing that ‘heaven and earth are to be purged by fire, that they may correspond with the kingdom of God.’[[47]](#footnote-48) Second, even if 2 Peter 3 is understood to describe the destruction of the earth, destruction does not mean annihilation. NT scholar Edward Adams points out that debates over 2 Pet. 3 operate within a dichotomy between total annihilation and transformation.[[48]](#footnote-49) While Adams believes that the text describes destruction, he argues that total annihilation would have been inconceivable to the author of the text. The author would envisage a destruction followed by a restoration, with material continuity between the old and the new. Accordingly, the new heavens and earth in 2 Pet. 3 do not come about through *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) but through *creatio ex vetere* (creation out of the old).[[49]](#footnote-50) Thus, even if this text describes the destruction of the earth, it need not challenge the continuity between the old and the new creations, which is what my argument for creation care hinges on.

The point, then, is that while my argument is not compatible with the view that creation will be annihilated, there is no strong biblical warrant for the view that God will destroy everything – after all, God himself promised Noah that he will not destroy everything again (Gen. 8:21) ­– and there is an even weaker warrant for the view that creation will be annihilated. Although my argument is incompatible with annihilation, it is not incompatible with dispensationalism. It is possible to maintain that there are dispensations and a millennium without embracing the view that God will annihilate his creation.[[50]](#footnote-51) In that case, one can still hold that the kingdom to come – which expresses God’s will for creation – ought to determine how we live and how we treat creation here and now.

# OBJECTION 2: DOES EVERYTHING NEED TO BE SAVED?

Let me consider a second objection to my argument hinging on the continuity between creation and the new creation. In the case of Jesus and in the case of all believers, the continuity concerns the individual, and the continuity of the individual entails that the individual should be taken care of. However, if the argument is based on the continuity of the individual, it seems to presuppose that all individual created things must be included in God’s salvation. Thus, we should care for things in the natural world because these things will be liberated and transformed. The question, then, is whether my argument for creation care entails that every single thing that God created will also be part of the new creation, which is a somewhat controversial eschatological view.

## Every created thing survives death

Some theologians have affirmed that God saves every single thing. For instance, Jürgen Moltmann takes the ‘restoration of all things’ quite literally, holding the view of a cosmic eschatology that includes every single created thing: ‘the Redeemer is no other than the Creator. He would contradict himself if he were not to redeem everything he has made.’[[51]](#footnote-52) Thus, *everything* here means literally everything. He envisages a resurrection ‘not merely for human beings, but for animals, plants, stones and all cosmic life systems as well’.[[52]](#footnote-53) Moltmann defends this view both by pointing to the connection of creation and redemption (as in the preceding quote), by pointing to Christ and the resurrection (that the raised body of Christ acts as an embodied promise for the whole creation)[[53]](#footnote-54) and by arguing that the human being is so embedded in creation that an existence isolated from it is inconceivable.[[54]](#footnote-55)

Karl Barth also formulates an eschatology that covers more than humans. He writes that God will not allow anything to perish, not even ‘the day-ﬂy in far-ﬂung epochs of geological time’.[[55]](#footnote-56) Some scholars might object that it is difficult to conceive a reality where everything that has ever existed will continue to exist side by side. To this objection, one could say that heaven cannot be overcrowded. Barth holds, however, that no creature will continue to existafter its death but rather, it will be eternally preserved by God.[[56]](#footnote-57) According to Barth, the Christian hope is not for a continuation of our existence into an indeﬁnite future with a somewhat altered life but for God’s ‘eternalising’ of our earthly life.[[57]](#footnote-58) He holds that time, as a form of existence, will come to an end, and accordingly, the afterlife is a participation in God’s timeless existence, a present without an afterwards. Although Barth’s eschatology has problems,[[58]](#footnote-59) it shows that an eschatology that includes every created being – which might be hard to conceive of as every being occupying a new Jerusalem – might be more easily envisaged as participation in God or existing in the mind of God than a form of renewed spatiotemporal existence.[[59]](#footnote-60)

I mentioned the eschatology of Barth and Moltmann to show that it is possible to formulate an eschatology affirming that every created thing will be transformed, which my argument for creation care is compatible with. Moreover, I mention these two theologians to show that my argument for creation care is compatible not only with a temporal view of God and the eschaton but also with a timeless view (as that of Barth). Now, let me consider other views that are not as permissive as Barth’s and Moltmann’s regarding how widely God’s redemption stretches.

## Some individual animals survive death

Philosopher Blake Hereth argues that all sentient animals will be brought into heaven and remain there for eternity.[[60]](#footnote-61) First, he posited that animals could have either no afterlife, a bad afterlife, or a good afterlife. As sentient beings, however, they would be better off enjoying a heavenly life than not doing so. Moreover, as animals are not morally blameworthy, they do not deserve nonexistence or a bad afterlife. A good God would ensure the best option: a good afterlife. Second, Hereth argues that sentient, non-blameworthy animals deserve just compensation for the suffering they have gone through for no fault of their own, and a just God would ensure such just compensation with immortality.[[61]](#footnote-62)

A difficulty with this argument is that compensation is not possible for a creature that is not conscious in the sense that it is aware of itself and recognises itself as the same self over time. God may recall to life an ant that died today, but it would not recognise itself as the same ant, meaning that the pleasant sensations of any other ant that lived after its death would be just as much, or rather just as little, compensation for its earthly sufferings.[[62]](#footnote-63) Such considerations of consciousness make theologian Keith Ward opt for a slightly more restrictive view of what types of beings are included in the afterlife. In his earlier works, he reasons along the same lines as Hereth, suggesting that all sentient beings will have a good afterlife as compensation for their suffering.[[63]](#footnote-64) In Ward’s later works, he suggests that only animals with a sense of continuing self, which he thinks most higher mammals possess, will be included.[[64]](#footnote-65)

There are good reasons to take the sense of continuing self as a demarcation line for what will be included in the heavenly life. Ward presupposes that heavenly compensation makes sense only for such beings. However, one can make the stronger argument that life after death is *metaphysically* *possible* only for such beings.[[65]](#footnote-66) Derek Parﬁt discusses personal identity over time by constructing puzzling cases, such as the case of teleportation. Imagine a person being teleported from Earth to the moon in a process where the exact state of the person’s cells is recorded and transmitted.[[66]](#footnote-67) In that case, is it the same person that appears on the moon, or have we just made a good replica? To say that it is the same person, we need an account of what constitutes identity through such change. When philosophers discuss identity through change and over time, most of them (Parfit included) argue that what grants such identity is psychological continuity*.*[[67]](#footnote-68)The person teleported to the moon is the same as the person who left Earth, as there is psychological continuity. There are views of identity through change other than those that emphasise psychological continuity, such as views emphasising physical or causal continuity. However, these views cannot grant identity through a person’s death and resurrection. It is one thing to make sense of identity through change and quite another to make sense of identity through death. If Paul is right in saying that the resurrection will happen ‘at the last trumpet’ (1 Cor. 15:52), there will be a gap in existence, a gap between the earthly life and the heavenly life. Such a gap will break a physical or causal continuity, meaning that one cannot appeal to physical or causal continuity to ensure identity through death and resurrection. However, one can appeal to psychological continuity. The capacity to have a sense of continuing self can guarantee personal identity through gaps where this capacity is not manifested, such as in dreamless sleep, coma or resurrection.[[68]](#footnote-69) These gaps in existence show that it is harder to make sense of continuity through death than of continuity through change. In such cases, psychological continuity might be, as Parfit suggests, the only explanation for continuing identity.[[69]](#footnote-70) Thus, if identity through death holds because the former person is psychologically connected to the latter, then a capacity to have a sense of continuing self becomes a demarcation line for what creatures can be included in the heavenly life. Persons can be resurrected, but birds and lilies that appear in heaven are replicas rather than resurrected earthly birds.

## Is creation care limited to a small part of creation?

My argument for creation care rests on the continuity between our earthly life and our heavenly life. Given our earlier discussion of identity through death, another possible objection to my argument is as follows: if only individuals with a sense of continuing self can have continuity between their earthly existence and their heavenly existence, this argument for creation care is either undermined or limited to a small part of creation: only to individuals with a capacity to have a sense of continuing self. I think there are two ways to respond to this objection: one, by distinguishing individuals from groups, and the other, by distinguishing between resurrection and renewal.

First, let me consider the distinction between individuals and groups. There is no shortage of biblical text illustrating heaven as a place where all kinds of animals thrive together and praise the glory of the Lord (i.e., Is. 11; Ps. 148).[[70]](#footnote-71) One could argue that while it is metaphysically impossible for God to restore individual birds and individual sheep, as they have no psychological continuity, he can restore them as groups or species to glorify himself through their peaceful heavenly coexistence. Thus, God can restore individuals with a sense of continuing self, and God can let other beings be represented in the eschaton as types rather than individuals.[[71]](#footnote-72) While the view that God restores individuals requires an account of individual identity through change, the view that God restores species or types of animals requires an account of species or group identity. Such an account seems to be easily available. In the Aristotelian view, a type of animal is identified by an essential quality, structure or function of the animal;[[72]](#footnote-73) and in the Platonist view, the identity of a type of animal comes from a form or an idea in the mind of God.[[73]](#footnote-74) Thus, by distinguishing individuals from groups and arguing that God does not restore individual animals but groups, one can still appeal to the continuity between earthly life and heavenly life as the ground for creation care. Given continuity at the group level, the argument for creation care still holds. Just as continuity at the individual level provides a reason for caring for individuals, continuity at the group level provides a reason for caring for species. However, because the species or group is composed of individuals, reasons to care for the species will trickle down to reasons to care for the individuals.

If the distinction between individuals and groups is not convincing either for theological or philosophical reasons, another distinction can be made to salvage the argument for creation care: the distinction between resurrection and renewal. One could hold that while only persons will be raised from the dead, the whole of creation will be renewed. This distinction has a biblical basis. Paul states that humans will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15), but there is no explicit mention of resurrection in Rom. 8. Byrne suggests that Paul might not have used resurrection language in Rom. 8 to avoid the implication that creation is heading towards destruction and rebirth. Byrne posits that the material universe is heading for a transformation into the age of salvation rather than dying (or being destroyed) and being raised.[[74]](#footnote-75) Physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne develops this view more systematically and philosophically, arguing that the new creation is not God’s second attempt at creation. As stated earlier, it is not a new *creation ex nihilo* but a *creatio* *ex vetere*.[[75]](#footnote-76) That is, God will not raise or renew the individual bird and lily but, at a certain time in the history of the universe, will bring forth an eschatological renewal of creation. The continuity, then, will not be between individual earthly birds and heavenly birds, and perhaps not at a group level either, as species could be quite different in the future from what they are today. The continuity will hold at a future macro level, as God’s new creation will be a transformation of a future state of the universe.[[76]](#footnote-77) If the continuity will hold at the macro level, the ecotheological argument will not be as strong as the view that God will restore every created thing, as in Moltmann and Barth, or will restore some individuals and some species. Continuity at the macro level gives a reason to care for the ecosystem, which might trickle down to reasons to care for groups and individual parts, but these reasons will not be as strong as reasons provided by individual or group continuity. Not only is there a vast distance between the macro level and individual created things, which makes it possible to care for the whole but still neglect some parts, but there is also a vast historical distance between the present state and the future renewed state of the universe. However, also on this eschatological view, there is some force to the idea that continuity warrants creation care, as the future is contingent on our present imprint on history. While much human work will disappear before the day of eschatological transformation, much communal human work leaves a permanent imprint on our social and natural environments. In addition, as generations stand on one another’s shoulders, the imprints of each generation build on previous ones. Based on this line of thought, theologian Miroslav Volf argued that ‘noble human efforts will not be wasted’[[77]](#footnote-78) but integrated by divine action into the new heaven and earth. Thus, as our actions towards creation impact the future of creation, they will in their modest ways contribute to God’s new creation, which means that our actions towards creation still matter.

# CONCLUSION

Paul states that resurrection implies continuity between our earthly body and our heavenly body. This continuity gives us reason to take care of ourselves and our bodies. In this paper, I argued that the same continuity between this world and the world to come gives us a reason to take care of nature. Although many good theological arguments for creation care have been formulated, a strength of the argument presented here is its Christological underpinning. By focusing specifically on resurrection as a basis for environmental care, I grounded environmental care at the centre of evangelical theology, showing that ecotheology can fit well into evangelical theology. Moreover, I argued that grounding creation care in the resurrection has an advantage over grounding it in eschatology and cosmic salvation, as while Rom. 8 provides hope for nature through the work of God, when it is read in light of 1 Cor.15, it shows why the hope of creation provides normative implications for human creation care. Finally, by considering some possible objections to my argument, I showed how my argument fits into a wide range of views on eschatology.

1. Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 337. Note that I am describing evangelical theology. For definitions of the evangelical movement, see George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 5; David William Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2–17; Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, *Cambridge Companions to Religion* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical–Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2013), 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 37; Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 40 (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Larsen and Treier, *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*; Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Dave Bookless, ‘Jesus Is Lord ... of All? Evangelicals, Earth Care, and the Scope of the Gospel’, in *Creation Care in Christian Mission*, ed. Kapya J. Kaoma, vol. 29, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series (Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 105–20; Harry O. Maier, ‘Green Millennialism: American Evangelicals, Environmentalism and the Book of Revelation’, in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. David G. Horrell (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 246–65. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010); John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); Alister E. McGrath, *The Reenchantment of Nature: The Denial of Religion and the Ecological Crisis* (NY: Doubleday/Galilee, 2003). See R. J. Berry and Laura Suzanne Meitzner Yoder, *John Stott on Creation Care* (Nottingham: IVP, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Colin Bell and Robert S. White, eds., *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2016); Edwar R. Brown, *Our Father’s World* (Cambridge, MA: Doorlight Publications, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 102–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. R. J. Berry, ed., *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action* (Leicester: IVP Academic, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Douglas J. Moo and Jonathan A. Moo, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World, Biblical Theology for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Laurel Kearns, ‘Noah’s Ark Goes to Washington: A Profile of Evangelical Environmentalism’, *Social Compass* 44, no. 3 (September 1997): 349–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776897044003004>; Katharine K. Wilkinson, *Between God and Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Richard Bauckham, ‘Reading the Synoptic Gospels Ecologically’, in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. David G. Horrell et al. (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. I Howard Marshall, ‘Commitment to Creation’, in *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*, ed. R. J. Berry (Leicester: IVP Academic, 2000), 95; Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation, Sarum Theological Lectures* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 141; Ernest Lucas, ‘The New Testament Teaching on the Environment’, *Transformation* 16, no. 3 (1999): 93–99. Another reason might be that it seems easier to establish common ground in an interreligious or secular conversation when appealing to creation theology rather than to Christology. Celia Deane-Drummond, *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth, Cascade Companions 37* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Norman Wirzba, ‘Creation through Christ’, in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, eds. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 35–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Douglas J. Moo, ‘Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 3 (2006); Lucas, ‘The New Testament Teaching on the Environment’. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 19–27; Richard B. Hays, ‘The Conversion of the Imagination: Scripture and Eschatology in 1 Corinthians’, *New Testament Studies* 45, no. 3 (1999): 391–412, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688598003919>; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God 3* (London: SPCK, 2003), 278–97. Eschatology has also been a ground for broader social responsibility, as in Bruce Nicholls, ed., *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* *(Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility)* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Lucas, ‘The New Testament Teaching on the Environment’. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Moo, ‘Nature in the New Creation’, 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Wright, 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. See also Isaiah 22, where the people of Israel have forgotten God, would not turn back, but rather, just ate and drank. See also Chapter 2 of the *Book of Wisdom*, where those who do not know God use the same reasoning as the Corinthians. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Dag Øistein Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs and the Success of Christianity* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 141 ff.; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 129 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Some might think that Paul was doing what Descartes did: distinguishing between a physical substance and a spiritual substance, so that the physical substance (*soma psychikon*) would pass away in favor of a spiritual substance (*soma pneumatikon*). I argue that Paul did not operate with a material distinction (i.e., what kind of matter the body is made of) but, rather, with a functional distinction (i.e., which powers govern man), so that Paul outlined how raised humanity is determined by, filled with and led by the spirit of God. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 348–52. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, *Christianity in the Making 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 870–72; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 46, 271; Mike Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL and Nottingham: IVP Academic and Apollos, 2010), 415; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New* *International Greek Testament* *Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 1276–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. See, for instance, Hays, *First Corinthians*, 270–71; Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. At present, when dead bodies are buried in the ground and not in a stone grave, it is natural to think of ‘it is sown’ as a metaphor for dying. However, the metaphor was perceived differently in antiquity as a metaphor for the creation of the human being [David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 733]. Look at verse 36, wherein Paul treats being sown and dying as two different things. The metaphor about what is sown and what sprouts up is therefore not about the transition from death to resurrection but about creation and the new creation – about the first Adam and the last Adam. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 272; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 477, 646. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* *(Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 438. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. When Paul refers to ‘the created’, he does not refer to created humans but to the rest of creation. See *Richard N. Longenecker, The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 721; Schreiner, *Romans*, 435. For an extended analysis of Romans 8:19–22, see Presian Renee Burroughs, *Creation’s Slavery and Liberation: Paul’s Letter to Rome in the Face of Imperial and Industrial Agriculture*, *Cascade Library of Pauline Studies* (Euguene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022), 102–96. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 471, 487; Schreiner, *Romans*, 437; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Rom. 8:20. See also Gen. 3:17ff; Hos. 4:1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. See Bell and White, *Creation Care and the Gospel*, 214; F. F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, *The* *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 6* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 160. This does not entail that Paul thought everyone would be saved and excludes the possibility of perdition. Paul extended the hope of salvation to apply not only to people, but he did not seem to think that salvation is available to people or angels who have rejected Christ (Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 723). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Brendan Byrne, ‘An Ecological Reading of Rom. 8:19–22: Possibilities and Hesitations’, in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. David G. Horrell et al. (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 83–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Byrne, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 122; Burroughs, *Creation’s Slavery and Liberation*, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. One could still push the theocentric point and ask why we ought to care for the body or creation when the renewal is the work of God. God can renew a body mangled in a traffic accident, so why should it matter if humans trash the environment, as God’s transformational work will always triumph over our ability to destroy? One way to answer this is that although God can fix our mistakes, we should not keep on doing them; we must stop sinning so that grace may increase. Another way is that a core theme in Paul’s ethics is to imitate God after the model of Christ, which, in this case, entails acting in harmony with God’s eschatological purpose. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Stephen N. Williams, *The Limits of Hope and the Logic of Love: Essays on Eschatology and Social Action* (Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2006), 61. Williams argues that love for creation should motivate creation care rather than hope for creation. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. That you to a reviewer for raising this concern. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Richard L. Fern, *Nature, God, and Humanity: Envisioning an Ethics of Nature* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Ole Martin Moen, ‘The Ethics of Wild Animal Suffering’, *Etikk i Praksis - Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics*, no. 1 (9 May 2016): 100, https://doi.org/10.5324/eip.v10i1.1972; Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*, 1st ed (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 122–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Ben Quash, ‘Treasuring the Creation’, in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004), 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. See for instance Celia Deane-Drummond, *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 256–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 39; Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace: Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 58. Some pre-millennialists might hold that we should welcome rather than hinder the destruction of this wrecked vessel, as its destruction entails that the long-awaited end is drawing near. However, if my treatment of 1 Cor. 15 and Rom. 8 is correct, and Christian eschatology is constructed in light of the resurrection, a proper response to the hope of renewal is to care for creation rather than welcoming its decay. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 59; Moo, ‘Nature in the New Creation’, 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1855), 381, <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom45/calcom45.vii.iv.iii.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Edward Adams, ‘Retrieving the Earth from the Conﬂagration: 2 Peter 3:5–13 and the Environment’, in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. David G. Horrell et al. (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 108–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Adams, 117; Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: 'Cosmic Catastrophe' in the New Testament and Its World* *(The Library of New Testament Studies 347)* (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2007), 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 682; Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 91–125. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1996), 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, 1st HarperCollins ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 258. See also Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 132; Richard Bauckham, ‘Eschatology in the Coming of God’, in *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. Richard Bauckham, 1. publ (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 260. Moltmann’s eschatology is motivated differently from that of Hereth and Ward below. He does not think in terms of compensation, in which animals are included in the afterlife because the heavenly afterlife is good for them. Rather, he holds that eschatology is not for creation’s sake but for God’s sake and God’s glory. Humans are not at the centre of heaven, nor any other created being; God is. In heaven, humans will worship God (Rev. 4–5), and so will the rest of creation (as in Ps. 148). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III.3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960), 90. See also Barth, *Church* *Dogmatics* III.3:, 84; Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (W. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 164; Ernst M. Conradie, *Hope for the Earth: Vistas for a New Century* (Wipf & Stock Pub., 2005), 151, 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1960, III.3:88. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III.2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960), 624. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. See, for instance, Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 70. The Christian hope is quite bleak in Barth’s eschatology. He might respond that being conserved eternally by God is not bleak but significant – what more could one want than one’s life to be eternally preserved by God and looked upon with delight? I, at least, hope for a two-way relationship and not only a one-sided relationship of God with humanity. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. See Conradie, *Hope for the Earth*, 294 ff. for a discussion of the relation between time and eternity with regard to the hope of the earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Blake Hereth, ‘Two Arguments for Animal Immortality’, in *Heaven and Philosophy*, ed. Simon Cushing (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Hereth, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (Quebec: Samizdat University Press, 2016), 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Keith Ward, *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Keith Ward, *Pascal’s Fire: Scientific Faith and Religious Understanding*, Repr. (Oxford: Oneworld Publ., 2007), 167; Atle Ottesen Søvik, *The Problem of Evil and the Power of God* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Atle O. Søvik, ‘Om forskjellen på dyr og mennesker i lys av evolusjonen [On the difference between animals and humans in the light of evolution]’ *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 3, no. 4 (2015): 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Eric T. Olson and Edward N. Zalta, ‘Personal Identity’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2019, [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/#ProPerIde](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/%23ProPerIde). Some people might be worried that appeal to psychological continuity sounds slightly dualistic, that it grants identity only to the *psycke* and not to the body, when the Christian hope concerns a bodily resurrection. However, that need not be a worry. If personhood is seen as embodied so that the physical and psychological identities are deeply interwoven, an appeal to psychological continuity implies some sort of physical continuity as well. In my view, persons are not identical to their body nor to a part of it (such as the brain), but a person is constituted by a body. In that case, persons need to be embodied but not necessarily to have the bodies that they have – an important point, as resurrection involves renewal of the body. This present corruptible body is my body, as it is the only body I can think of, and I refer to it in the ﬁrst-person point of view. My future glorified body will also be my body, as it is I who think of and refer to it in the ﬁrst-person point of view. See Lynne Rudder Baker, ‘Persons and the Metaphysics of Resurrection’, in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Farnham, Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010), 161–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Josef Quitterer, ‘Hylomorphism and the Constitution View’, in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Farnham, Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010), 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 206. Other formulations of psychological continuity are possible. One could argue that the soul – defined as the form of the body – constitutes personal identity and will be given a new and glorified body, which means that the soul ensures continuity. Furthermore, one could fill the gap in the soul’s existence by stating that in the time between a person’s death and resurrection, the divine mind remembers the soul. See Ted Peters, ‘Resurrection: The Conceptual Challenge’, in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds. Ted Peters, Robert J. Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. David Clough, *On Animals: Systematic Theology Volume I*, T&T Clark Theology (London and NY: T&T Clark, 2012), 154 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. James G. Lennox, ‘Aristotle on Genera, Species, and “the More and the Less”’, *Journal of the History of Biology* 13, no. 2 (1980): 332, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00125746> ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. See different possible formulations in Chapter 2.4 in Einar Duenger Bøhn, *God and Abstract Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Some might object to securing group identity in something as abstract as ideas in the mind of God. Creation care concerns concrete things while appealing to abstract ideas is an appeal to something one cannot care for or harm. Now, this objection conflates that which constitutes identity with that which we should care for. What constitutes an entity’s identity through change might be abstract, either a sense of self over time or an idea in the mind of God, but what we should care for is not simply that which constitutes the entity’s identity but the entity itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Brendan Byrne, ‘Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8:18–22’, in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel, The Earth Bible 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. John C. Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-up Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. This view of how God will bring forth his new creation touches upon questions of how to reconcile Christian eschatology with cosmology. For an overview, see Robert John Russell, ‘Scientiﬁc Insights into the Problem of Personal Identity in the Context of a Christian Theology of Resurrection and Eschatology’, in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Farnham, Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010), 241–58. According to the present cosmology, our universe does not have an eternal future, and it will probably continue to expand forever and freeze or collapse back to a singularity. However, the Christian hope is not based on cosmology but on the Christ event. See Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993), 176. Furthermore, the hope is not that everything will be new, given that the universe follows its natural course, but that God will make everything new. The present cosmology, then, does not undermine the hope that everything will be new, as it only describes how the universe will end if there were no divine act. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Miroslav Volf, ‘On Loving with Hope’, in *The Limits of Hope and the Logic of Love: Essays on Eschatology and Social Action*, ed. Stephen N. Williams (Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2006), 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)