

Jawanza Eric Clark, *Reclaiming Stolen Earth: An Africana Ecotheology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022. 240 pages. \$35.

In *Reclaiming Stolen Earth: An Africana Ecotheology*, Jawanza Eric Clark argues for the inclusion and prioritizing of land or Earth as a theological symbol and for reframing space as a theological concept. In his proposal, he interrogates liberal/progressive ecology and Black theology while explaining the importance of African and Native American spiritualities in addressing ecological concerns. Clark, who identifies as an African American constructive theologian, places his approach within the field of Africana religious studies "which seeks to increase our understanding of, and to affirm and appreciate the knowledge produced by, the religious cultures of African-descended peoples worldwide" (x-xi).

Clark presents a way of addressing ecological concerns that accounts for what he calls the white epistemological hubris that negatively impacts the Earth and all of creation (xiv-xv). Clark's proposal uses African, Black Diaspora (especially African American), and Native American spiritualities as foundational elements of his constructive theology. According to Clark, what many white ecological advocates and Black liberation theologians fail to address is the white epistemological hubris that promotes "the myth of objectivity, a false universalism, and a vicious individualism, all framed within a temporal orientation" (xv). Clark proposes reframing space as a theological concept as a primary means of addressing both the ecological crisis and ongoing racial injustices. He relies on an Africana theological method that "prioritize[s] the present and the importance of being in right relationship with the spaces we occupy, including the natural world" (xxiii).

In chapter 1, Clark explains this Africana theological method as one which champions interdependence and values "living revelation" over Western white Christianity's focus on revelation as "grounded in a historical revelation, a past moment" (15). For African and Native American traditionalists, God's revelation is ongoing with God communicating through all creatures, in a variety of forms, including through dreams and communing with nature (15). Clark lauds several Womanist theologians who "help us move away from an abstract theology rooted in a temporal orientation to one concerned with the practical import of living bodies" (17). He also pushes against Womanist and other theologies when they prioritize the Bible or the Cross over a spatial orientation that spiritualizes and prioritizes the land/Earth as a theological symbol.

In chapter 2, "The Failure to Indigenize Space: The Legacy of Stolen Earth," Clark focuses on the history of land dispossession, often by violent means, and the damage caused to the land and to people of color. As he does throughout the book, Clark gives specific examples of Black Americans violently dispossessed of land. Viewing this history through a theological lens, Clark argues that efforts to heal the earth must include recognition of the damaging impact of white supremacy and colonial proscriptions that demonized indigenous religions and disconnected people from the land. He calls for an "Africana ecotheology, that can begin to create a path toward reconciliation with the land and the Earth" (38). Reconciliation would include "the promotion of sacred memory, the overcoming of historical racial amnesia, and the development of rituals of healing and renewal based on a spatial orientation that gives attention to the legacy of blood-soaked and resource-depleted spaces of Earth" (38).

In chapter 3, Clark focuses on reconceptualizations of God he claims are needed in Western Christianity, including in Black Protestant Christian traditions. Clark calls for incorporating aspects of traditional African spirituality and African mystical traditions (83-84).

This would include embracing a doctrine of God "capable of addressing the trauma incurred by African-descended people's spatial dislocation and legacy of rigid geographical containment and alienation from the Earth" (84). Engaging the works of Albert Cleage, Jr., Ishmael Tettah, and Emmanuel Lartey, Clark supports an understanding of God "as creative energy, power, and intelligence" who is "neither a white racist nor a being on the side of the oppressed" (122).

In chapter 4, "Black Suffering and the Urgency for New Theological Symbols," Clark advocates for rejecting theological symbols that "instantiate social death under the guise of a false universalism" (142). He encourages embracing indigenous African religious symbols and orientations that emphasize the interrelationship of the natural world, all creatures, and the spiritual world, including the ancestors (143). Regarding the ancestors, Clark states, "Because they reside in the natural world, the ancestors provide a conceptual bridge linking racial suffering to the Earth's suffering and continental Africa with North America" (143),

Clark concludes by addressing the question "What Is Liberation?" in chapter 5. Here Clark challenges what he views as Black Theology's and many other liberation theologies' emphases on political and economic liberation. He applauds the work of Womanist and eco-Womanist theologians like Delores Williams, Monica Coleman, and Melanie Harris for advancing the concept of liberation not as a destination or achievement in a political or economic system but as a "theme of survival/improving quality of life" (173). Clark highlights Coleman's emphasis on creative transformation, which incorporates Process Theology as well as symbols and concepts of several religions, particularly African traditional religions.

Clark offers a text that incorporates historical overviews of Black theology, liberation theology, and Womanist theology in connection with Christian engagement in restoring and healing the land. Clark's *Reclaiming Stolen Earth* is an accessible text that invites Christians in particular to re-examine theological symbols used to support or detract from land dispossession and ecological devastation and to view land/Earth as a theological symbol and spiritual sibling crucial to human wholeness as well as human existence.

La Ronda D. Barnes
Boston University School of Theology
Boston, MA