Introduction

Greening the Children of God uncovers theological roots of the growing ethical imperative to reconnect children with their natural environment. The crisis in our moral responsibility to care for the earth has caused a rapid loss of habitats, biodiversity, and the degradation of ecosystems that have accelerated the effects of climate change. In her book *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Rosemary Radford Ruether writes, "We do not have thousands of years to unlearn the wrong patterns that were established over thousands of years. The exponential speed-up of these cumulative patterns of destruction means we have to both learn new patterns and put them into practice on a global scale within the next generation."[1] Human beings have to quickly learn to make ecologically sound decisions regarding every aspect of our lives. But as we consider our choices for transportation, the food we consume, the homes that we live in, the goods that we buy, or the investments we make, what motivates people to make decisions to care for non-human members of the earth community? People may be convinced by climate data and various economic or pragmatic rationales. But thoughtful, empathetic and altruistic decisions for the common good are also motivated by relationships. Being able to identify with "the other" who is impacted by any given decision generates degrees of empathy that shape our moral discernment.

The connection between experience and ethical discernment is natural, given that humans are not merely rational beings. We are relational creatures. Embodied relationships are theologically, psychologically and ethically significant, because we do not only derive knowledge from what we think. We make meaning out of what we experience. This is true for Christian moral discernment as well. While the apostolic seed of Christianity is rooted in a text, that text refers to acts of divine revelation—the giving of the Law, the incarnation, acts inspired by the Holy Spirit—which are phenomena, experiences, and encounters with the Divine. Religious and sacred texts are derived from lived experiences of those phenomena and

1. Ruether, *Gaia and God*.

refer us back to the relationship which gave them meaning. Jesus teaches that the summary of the entire Mosaic Law is love—to love God and our co-creatures. But the letter of 1 John (4:7–21) is clear that the motivation to love comes not from a legal prescription, but from the experience of being loved. Because we are loved, therefore we are motivated to love. Perhaps love can be commanded or explained rationally. *(Parents tend to exhaust themselves commanding siblings to love one another!)* But there is surely no more effective way to communicate love to someone than to love them. A relationship creates the potential for love to be fully known. In this way, relationships are grounds for moral knowledge.

In terms of environmental ethics, this means that rational scientific or economic information is not the only way to motivate people to extend the common good to non-human creation. The phenomenal encounter with another creature creates the possibility of a morally significant relationship. This interdisciplinary study explores how a child's relationship with non-human creatures forms their moral identity and why that relationship is a significant part of making meaning in our ecological age.

Knowing as a Child

This study addresses the ways in which a child comes to know who they are as a human creature, and how they cultivate moral significance from that knowledge. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul recognizes that we use different ways or modes to make meaning at different stages of our life. He wrote,

> We know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Cor 13:8–13)

If this passage is read in a cognitivist fashion, "childish" seems to suggest a deficient rational state that will be perfected as the child transitions to adult modes of knowing. But the subject of Paul's letter is the ultimate knowledge of God that comes from the experience of standing in the unmasked presence of Divine Love. In that eschatological moment of perfect union with the Divine, we will know the full truth about the essence of God and ourselves as we are "fully known" by God. Relative to that unmediated encounter, Paul acknowledges that all forms of knowing are limited or at least

mediated, as if looking in a mirror dimly. Read in this light, Paul's statement on the childlike mode of knowing is not necessarily negative—it is simply a different way of perceiving. Human knowledge is always mediated by our perceptual capacities, which naturally change as we develop.

In the second Hebrew creation narrative, the animals were brought before the earthling, *Adam*, so that he could name them (Gen 2:18–20). In Hebrew scripture, the power to name or rename implies a deep knowledge of the nature of the creature or place that is named. What was the relationship between the earthling and other creatures, and what modes of perception did the earthling use to "know" these creatures deeply enough to name them? Anthropologists help us hypothesize about early humans' capacity to reason and make meaning. But in the earliest days of our species, knowledge was certainly not derived linguistically. Language is a part of culture that evolves over time. The first earthlings were preverbal, as are all children when they first engage the world with wonder and playfulness in their morally formative years. In this way, the Genesis narrative affirms that knowing is not a mere cognitive, intellectual exercise. Knowing is the result of being deeply embedded in a web of right relationships. Any effort to reify knowledge outside of that holistic mode of meaning making results in a willful isolation of the individual. Genesis figures this disintegration from the created whole as sin.

Throughout the Bible, a variety of human capacities are used to derive knowledge about the Truth that is woven into the fabric of creation. The Magi used inductive physical science to triangulate the position of a newly revealed star. Pontius Pilate's wife derived meaning about Jesus from dreams. Paul used Athenian philosophy and poetry to communicate the nature of revealed truth. The psalmist and prophets were able to interpret the significance of a changing landscape and fluctuating crop yields. The Torah ritualizes a legal system of health, hygienic, dietary, social, agricultural, and economic practices as a way to communicate moral knowledge of God's will for life. Elizabeth's pre-natal baby leapt *in utero* when it sensed the resonance of Mary's voice. Jesus urged his followers to contemplate creation, notice the change of seasons, respect natural cycles of vegetation, consider animal behavior, and adopt the epistemological mode of a child in their midst. The Biblical narrative brims with a diverse range of ways to perceive God's self-revelation, and to derive meaning from that divine self-communication.

So to return to Paul's text, we should not interpret this text as denigrating a child's mode of knowing, for he affirms many times that all human ways of knowing Truth are incomplete. His letter acknowledges that a child's ways of knowing are particularly suited to their stage in life. So without contradiction we are free to ask, what are childlike ways of knowing? How do

children perceive their world? How do children create meaning and what motivates them to find moral significance? And perhaps most significantly, what are the ethical consequences when adults put aside childlike modes of engaging the natural world in which we live and move and have our being? This book will show how this sort of epistemological departure—disintegrating our rational selves from our ecological place in the web of life—has played a tremendous role in the ecological crisis of our age, and why it is important that we cultivate a childlike knowledge of creation in every age.

Age-Appropriate Ways of Knowing

Between birth and death, life can be divided into ages. In each age an organism will express different qualities, engage the environment with different capacities and respond from a different social location. Insects develop from egg to larva to pupa to adult. Humans develop from embryo to infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood. Woodland ecosystems develop from prairies to pine stands to old growth deciduous forests.

Since its formation, our planet has developed as well. During the Hadean age, the moon was formed and the surface of the young earth was bombarded by celestial bodies. During the Archean age, life formed from the dust of the earth, and plants began to synthesize solar energy into oxygen. During the Proterozoic age, the oxygen rich atmosphere gathered above the waters of the earth, early animals thrived in earth's energetic richness. During the Paleozoic age, the lands shifted among the seas that teemed with life, while vertebrates and arthropods roamed coniferous forests. The great reptiles ruled the Mesozoic age until the earth cooled into the Cenozoic age when mammals began to thrive. Through the Paleogene, Neogene and Pleistocene periods, a diversity of small and large mammals evolved alongside birds, amphibians, reptiles, marine and plant life. Then humans emerged from the dust and the earth entered its Holocene period.

The whole course of human history—our agrarian and artisanal cultures, our languages, our making, our systems of familial, economic and legal society, our commerce and conflicts, our built environments and technological advances, everything that we know—has developed in this briefest of all ages. From the human activity that dominates this short period we derive the name, Anthropocene.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the Anthropocene devolved into a geologically and ecologically destructive period. The impact of human activity began to physically alter the face of the earth, like wrinkles in the skin of a body entering its middle age. Delicate habitats, like organs, are failing,

and earth's body is slowly becoming septic. Wetlands are the earth's liver that cleans toxins from its streams. But they are undergoing cirrhosis from coastal development. Mountaintops are the earth's kidneys that purify the circulatory system of contaminants. But they are being surgically removed or occluded by mining. The vast forests are earth's lungs that filter pollutants from the air. But they are being cleared, leaving vast deserts of scar tissue that cannot exchange CO2 for Oxygen. The oceans are the earth's endocrine system that maintains a proper chemical balance. But abnormal temperature shifts have rendered the oceans too acidic to support the great reefs and vital supplies of probiotic micro-fauna that maintain the digestive health of the body. When biological systems are compromised, tissues begin to breakdown. The rapid disintegration of delicately balanced habitats is causing an unsustainable loss of biodiversity.

We extract nutrients from the earth's energy cycles at levels that overrun the earth's capacity to heal itself. By draining its nutrient reserves, we are compromising the earth's immune system. The steady rise in average temperatures, like a fever, is a sign that the earth is struggling to conserve the energy it needs to restore equilibrium. This planetary breakdown is the result of our violent lifestyles; I say violent, because our demands violate reasonable limits of sustainable consumption. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople observed that violating biological and planetary limits which sustain the created order constitutes a sin:

> We have traditionally regarded sin as being merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by contributing to climate change, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, land and air—all of these are sins.[2]

In Romans 8, Paul related the travails of creation to our sinfulness. Paul knew that creation groaned as a result of our sinfulness. He also believed that the redemption of creation was integrally tied to ours. When the children of God are harmoniously restored to right relationships, creation will also be liberated from its struggle. Patriarch Bartholomew I had such an age in mind when he co-wrote the following statement with Pope John Paul II for their Common Declaration on the Fourth Ecological Symposium in June 2002:

2. Bartholomew, *Cosmic Grace*, *Humble Prayer*, 190.

> It is not too late. God's world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation, we could steer the earth toward our children's future. Let that generation start now.[3]

Bartholomew I and John Paul II were calling us to put aside the old ways of the Anthropocene that led to the gross injustices against the earth and her creatures, and renew our knowledge of what it means to be a human creature today. Catholic priest and eco-theologian Thomas Berry also wrote about the inauguration of a new ecological age. In his 1991 E. F. Schumacher Society Lecture, Berry observed that "we have already terminated the Cenozoic period of the geo-biological systems of the planet. . . . A renewal of life in some creative context requires that a new biological period come into being; a period when humans would dwell upon the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner." He dubbed this new period of redemptive mutuality, the Ecozoic Age.[4]

Knowledge in the Ecozoic Age

What are the epistemological hallmarks of our "new mode of being"[5] in the Ecozoic Age? In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis affirms that the task of understanding our peculiar role as humans and establishing the conditions for justice and peace for the whole inhabited earth necessarily demands ecumenical and interdisciplinary conversation. He appeals for a new multilateral dialogue between the arts, science and religion.[6] Pope Francis recognizes that while "specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge,"[7] we should expand the epistemological conversation and seek solidarity among scientific, theological, cultural and aesthetic modes of knowing. Only an interdependent approach can overcome the disintegrating forces of economic and materialist theories that have colonized our human self-understanding for centuries.

While we research new ways to green our technological and economic sectors, we must also help one another rediscover what it means to be a human creature in the Ecozoic age. The Pope highlights the role that awe, wonder and loving relationships play in discovering our ecological selves.[8] He points to his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, as one who knew that "an

3. Bartholomew, *Cosmic Grace*, *Humble Prayer*, 281.
4. Berry, "Ecozoic Era," 196.
5. Berry, "Ecozoic Era," 196.
6. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 14, 62.
7. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 201.
8. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 11.

integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human."[9] We are beings, made from the dust of the earth, whose spiritual and material well-being is ecologically embedded. As Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, we must remember that "we do not have a body, we are a body."[10] To this end, chapter 6 of *Laudato Si* is devoted to the wisdom of reconciling Ecological Education and Spirituality. The Pope's instinct is affirmed by the growing consensus between environmental educators, eco-philosophers, theological ethicists, naturalists, poets and scientists who agree that a paramount ethical goal of our time is to reconnect children to their natural ecology as a means to know what it means to be human, and form an ecological notion of the self.

This interdisciplinary convergence is a consistent hallmark of our emerging Ecozoic Age. However, above I used the word "reconciling" to describe this convergence because scientific and moral knowledge have not always been estranged as they were during the Anthropocene. There was a time when every discipline was understood as being part of an epistemological whole. There was a time when truth was equally pursued in the laboratory, in religious devotion, in our social interactions, in the humanities and in the daily perception of our relationship to the natural world around us. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis quotes Ali al-Khawas, the ninth-century Sufi mystic, who wrote, "Prejudice should not have us criticize those who seek ecstasy in music or poetry. There is a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world. The initiate will capture what is being said when the wind blows, the trees sway, water flows, flies buzz, doors creak, birds sing, or in the sound of strings or flutes, the sighs of the sick, the groans of the afflicted."[11] At the time of Ali al-Khawas, natural and moral knowledge were still two parts of one science, both contributing to a full understanding of what it meant to be human.

Returning to the Source of the Epistemological Schism

In Europe, relationship between scientific and ecclesial authority became contentious during the late Renaissance. But the bond between scientific and moral epistemology began to disintegrate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Scientific Revolution was ushered along by the intellectual pursuits of Francis Bacon, Renée Descartes and Isaac Newton among

9. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 11.
10. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 77.
11. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 153n159.

others. Most heralded the liberation of natural science from the confines of metaphysical deduction as a necessary step for humanity to pass from the dark childhood of religious superstition into the enlightened knowledge of inductive truth. However, there were those who had a firm understanding of the morally pro-formative quality of our relationship to the natural world and warned against the consequences of alienating scientific and moral reasoning. One such clairvoyant was the seventeenth-century Anglican priest and poet Thomas Traherne. He was a poet, a priest, a theologian and a naturalist trained at Oxford in the sciences of his day. He embraced the epistemological nexus of theology, aesthetics, science and a childlike engagement with the natural world. From what we would now call an interdisciplinary perspective Thomas Traherne developed a moral theory that promoted the "sweetest and most delightful methods"[12] of forming an ecologically rooted moral identity. He developed an ethic of care that could overcome the disintegrating violence of his age, that is remarkably suited for our Ecozoic age.

Thomas Traherne was five years old when the violence of the English Civil War reached the walled city of Hereford in the autumn of 1642 and again in 1645.[13] The son of a Herfordshire shoemaker[14] and a family of committed royalists, Thomas lost his parents while still an infant, was adopted by his uncle Philip, and witnessed the violence of at least two sieges of his home city by the time he was 12.[15] Traherne was not only a witness to violent conflict, but was educated amongst the philosophical, social, theological and scientific upheaval that defined seventeenth-century England. We might assume that the vision of political and ecclesiastical roots of such violence would cause an orphaned child to join the growing ranks of those skeptical of faith in a loving, just God. The writings of Traherne's early contemporary, Thomas Hobbes, reveal such noticeable scars of war. Basil Willey suggests that the violence and bloodshed led Hobbes to surmise that humanity was locked in a "war of all against all" according to its natural tendencies towards competition, diffidence and glory.[16] In the words of Willey, Hobbes concluded that "through the disgust of chaos" humankind would be willing "to swallow the medicine of despotism" and come to rely on the social covenant of government as the source, or force, of peace.[17] Thomas Traherne,

12. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:17.

13. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxxii.

14. Anthony Wood records this vital biographical information in his entry on Thomas Traherne in his *Athenae Oxonienses*, which is reprinted in its entirety in Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxiii.

15. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxxvii.

16. Willey, *English Moralists*, 158.

17. Willey, *English Moralists*, 158. I will explore this theme in chapter 1.

however, is a radical exception to Hobbes's rule. In an unsigned preface to the posthumously published edition of Traherne's *A Serious and Pathetical Contemplation*, the editor acknowledged that Traherne lived during "disordered Times when the Foundations were cast down and this excellent Church laid in the dust, and dissolved into *Confusion* and *Enthusiasme.*"[18] Yet his "Soul was of a more refin'd allay, and his Judgment in discerning for things more solid, and considerate then to be infected with that Leaven."[19] In the midst of conflict, Thomas Traherne found a focal point of consideration that helped him perceive the peaceableness of the Kingdom.

Rather than being distracted by the image of humanity's ability to do violence, young Thomas kept his gaze set upon Creation. In communion with creation he felt the manifestation of God's beauty and peaceableness. In the opening of his *Centuries*, he writes:

> Beauty being a thing consisting of variety, that body could be not one simple being, but must be sweetly tempered of a manifold and delightful mixture of fixtures and colours . . . how do we know, but the world is that body, which the Deity hath assumed to manifest His Beauty and by which He maketh Himself as visible, as it is possible He should? Since therefore this visible World is the body of God, not His natural body, but which He hath assumed; let us see how glorious His wisdom is in manifesting Himself thereby. It hath not only represented His infinity and eternity which we thought impossible to be represented by a body, but His beauty also, His wisdom, goodness, power, life and glory, His righteousness, love and blessedness: all which as out of a plentiful treasury, may be taken and collected out of this world.[20]

Traherne claims that the plenitude of virtues such as beauty, goodness, and wisdom are manifest in creation in ways that can be apprehended by the senses. Therefore, these virtues can be "collected out of this world." In the opening pages of his *Centuries*, he suggests it is his intention to teach others the methods to "know" these virtues through communion with creation.

> The fellowship of the Mystery which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God lies concealed! The thing hath been from the Creation of the World, but hath not so been explained as that the interior Beauty should be understood. It is my design therefore in such a plain manner to unfold it that my friendship

18. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxxii.
19. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxxii.
20. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:65–66.

> may appear in making you possessor of the whole world. I will not by the noise of bloody wars and the dethroning of kings advance you to glory: but by the gentle ways of peace and love. As a deep friendship meditates and intends the deepest designs for the advancement of its objects, so doth it shew itself in choosing the sweetest and most delightful methods.[21]

He desires to share those "methods" by which a child is able to sense the goodness, blessedness, and love of God that is revealed in the "plentiful treasury" of Creation. His writings suggest the deep connection between a child's direct interaction with creation and the formation of a moral identity that is rooted in the virtues of goodness, peaceableness and care. For those who sought a "method" to nurture the virtues in their lives, he counselled:

> Above all, pray to be sensible of the Excellency of the Creation, for upon the due sense of its Excellencey the life of Felicity wholly dependeth. Pray to be sensible of the Excellencey of Divine Laws, and of all the Goodness which your Soul comprehendeth. Covet a lively sense of all you know, of the Excellency of God, and of Eternal Love; of your own Excellencey, and of the worth and value of all Objects whatsoever. For to feel is as necessary, as to see their Glory.[22]

Traherne's claim about the role of the senses in moral formation invites questions regarding his moral theology and epistemological questions about the relationship between scientific knowledge and revealed knowledge. Traherne offers a particularly interesting subject for this enquiry because he lived during the age when empiricism and rationalism, science and faith, moral philosophy and social theory were all beginning to part ways. This book will explore his moral theory and demonstrate why he believed retiring into creation was one "method" of knowing the loving, peaceable goodness of the Creator, and therefore forming our moral identity as peaceable creatures. It will demonstrate the theological and scientific reasons why he believed a relationship with creation is a significant component of the moral formation of a child. It will also demonstrate how his "methods" are helpful to our contemporary pursuit of moral theology, epistemology, and the moral formation of children in our Ecozoic Age.

21. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:17.
22. Traherne, *Christian Ethicks*, 6.

Traherne's Moral Theory: A New Look at Old Questions

Traherne scholars have long noted the central role that childhood and nature play within his poetry and prosaic meditations. However, explaining the rationale for his understanding of nature and childhood has proven enigmatic. According to personal accounts of his life, his knowledge of the peace that was woven into the fabric of creation could be understood as a simple extension of his naturally felicitous and perhaps optimistic personality. The editor of Traherne's first published writings remembers Traherne as a "Divine of the Church of England," who was "so wonderfully transported with the Love of God to Mankind" that he would discourse with anyone he met "whether they had any sense of Religion or not." But "his company was very acceptable to all such as had any inclinations to Vertue." He was

> a man of a cheerful and sprightly Temper, free from any thing of the sourness or formality, by which some great pretenders of Piety rather disparage and misrepresent true Religion, than recommend it and therefore was very affable and pleasant in his Conversation, ready to do all good Offices to his Friends, and Charitable to the Poor almost beyond his ability.[23]

At the time of Traherne's death at the age of 36, in October 1674, Thomas Good wrote to the Dean of Worcester, "I believe it is not news to you that Tom Traherne is dead, one of the most pious ingenious men that ever I was acquainted with."[24] While accounts of his personal peaceableness seem unanimous, his mix of piety and ingenuity has been difficult to articulate. His writings are notoriously eclectic and his influences diverse. Many scholars have sought to explain his use of childhood and nature according to contemporary literary[25] and theological[26] influences, while others attribute his ability to discern the Divine virtues in nature to a mystical charism.[27] However, Traherne research in the twentieth century was based on the two

23. The following quotes come from the unsigned preface to the first edition, which can be read in Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxxi–xxxii.

24. Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, 1:xxviii.

25. Such theses include Ellrodt, *L'Inspiration personnelle*; Martz, *Paradise Within*; Ponsford, "Poetry of Thomas Traherne."

26. Grant, *Transformation of Sin*; "Original Sin," 40–61; Marks, "Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism," 521–34; Cefalu, "Thomistic Metaphysics and Ethics," 248.

27. Wöhrer, *Thomas Traherne*; Salter, *Thomas Traherne*; Clements, *Mystical Poetry of Thomas Traherne*; Sherrington, *Mystical Symbolism*; Matar, "Thomas Traherne's Solar Mysticism."

collections of Traherne's poetry and meditations known as the Dobell and Margoliouth sequences. While his poetry and meditations are extensive, the poetic style that continues to inspire[28] also has a masking effect that evades systematic analysis or reflection.

However, in 1997 a new corpus of Traherne manuscripts was discovered in the Lambeth Palace and Folger Libraries. These new manuscripts more than double the size of Traherne's previously known writings.[29] Most of these writings are explicitly theological in nature and clearly reflect the theological, scientific and social milieu of his day. Denise Inge commented that after centuries of relative obscurity at worst and literary interest at best, Thomas Traherne is ready to "come home" to his Anglican roots and be considered not only as one of Britain's metaphysical poets, but as a priest and theologian.[30]

This discovery has opened up new fronts in the field of Traherne research. The new documents make possible a more rigorous study of Traherne's moral theory as well as the scientific and social influences that contributed to his "ingenious" contribution to moral theology. I will demonstrate that Traherne's moral theory was far more sophisticated than previously thought. He did not merely derive his notion of childhood and nature from the Platonist theologians and poets of his day. Traherne was studying the rationale for a Trinitarian moral theology at the nexus of his own scientific education, personal observations of the mutuality that exists within creation and the peculiar way that children perceive the benefits of being in relationship to nature. His moral theory is well suited to provide guidance and insight to the moral and scientific vocation of our Ecozoic Age.

The Shape of This Study

Chapter 1 will locate Traherne among his philosophical and theological predecessors. It will demonstrate the limitations of previous attempts to suggest Traherne is merely derivative of Platonism and metaphysical poetry. This chapter will outline his relationship to the new modes of scientific thought that were developing in his day, and compare him to the Paracelsian and

28. D. Elton Trueblood writes, "Traherne's many modern admirers include Thomas Merton, as well as C. S. Lewis, who extolled the Meditations as 'almost the most beautiful book in English'" (Kurian and Smith, *Encyclopedia of Christian Literature*, 607).

29. Denise Inge recounts the stories of Dobell's discovery of Traherne's poetry and *Centuries of Meditations*, as well as the recent discovery of the new Traherne text (Inge, *Wanting Like a God*, 267). Prior to this discovery, Traherne's works amounted to two volumes plus *Select Meditations*.

30. Inge, "Poet Comes Home," 335–48.

mechanical scientists. Finally it will locate Traherne among the Paracelsian school of science, and propose the impact that this new system of inductive reasoning had on his education and moral theory.

Chapter 2 will outline the empirical basis of Traherne's moral theory, with particular attention on his manuscript *The Kingdom of God*. This chapter outlines the theological and empirical means by which creation communicates goodness. Optical theories and knowledge of the atom play a significant role in the way creatures communicate their virtues to one another. This empirical aspect of his theory provides the basis of his critique of atheistic skepticism, particularly the theory of Thomas Hobbes. This chapter concludes by suggesting the role that the senses play in the perception of moral epistemology.

Chapter 3 begins a three-part study of *Inducements to Retirednes*. This chapter explores Traherne's understanding of the principles of human perception, particularly that of children. Among the "rules" of perception, wonder plays a significant role in a child's interaction with nature. By engaging their naturally social sense of wonder, Traherne suggests that a child can perceive the moral communication of creatures and the environment. This chapter engages the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and various contemporary psychologists to understand the moral significance of the environment and the nature of the ecological self.

Chapter 4 continues the study of *Inducements*, and considers the role that nature plays in creating a theatre for forming an inter-subjective moral identity. Utilizing current themes in developmental child psychology, it demonstrates that Traherne understands how a significant relationship to the environment and other creatures helps a child form a moral identity as a creature in relationship to the Creator.

Chapter 5 continues the study of *Inducements*, and explores how discerning our mutual "interest" in being in relationship with other creatures provides the moral motivation to care. This chapter contrasts Traherne's notion of interest with that of Immanuel Kant in order to demonstrate the theologically positive effect that can be derived from realizing the way in which local environments care for the child. The chapter ends by suggesting knowledge of mutual care can motivate moral responses and nurture the basis for a caring moral identity.

Finally, chapter 6 considers the pedagogical implications of Traherne's moral theory. Within the current field of moral education, Traherne's moral theory represents what may be called an ethic of care. Relationships of care have a pro-formative impact on the child's development of a relational, caring moral identity. The chapter shows how Traherne's concept of our relationship with creation resembles a pro-formative ethic of care that is

not very different from contemporary forms of environmental and place-based education. It explores current trends in the field of environmental and moral education. Then it suggests Thomas Traherne provides a model for deploying environmental or place-based education as a part of the Christian moral formation of children that resonates with the work of current moral theologians. Finally, the book concludes by showing how Traherne's writing on the festival of Rogation outlines a liturgically embedded, place-based moral relationship with creation.

The Significance of This Study

At its core, the current book is a study of the moral theory of Thomas Traherne. This endeavor has merit in its own right. However, Traherne makes it clear that questions of moral theology cannot be removed from questions regarding social theory, philosophical and scientific understandings of human nature, and the moral significance of our relationship to other creatures. Traherne warned of the consequences of disassociating these disciplines.

Through an ecological reading of recently discovered manuscripts, *Greening the Children of God* shows how Traherne anticipated the pedagogical and ethical consequences of divorcing scientific and moral reasoning, and the promise of recovering his theological voice for our age. Traherne affirmed that in order to fully form virtues such as goodness, peaceableness and care, humans needed to be embedded in God's creation. Being among the diversity of creatures in their natural place creates a relational theatre, or "communion," in which we can perceive how the thread of mutual "interest" among creatures is woven into the fabric of nature. This morally significant place-based knowledge becomes a motivation to care for creation. For Traherne a phenomenological engagement with nature is especially suited to the moral formation of children, who apprehend nature with their senses. Their innate wonder equips them to form an ecological identity in relationship to the earth, and become human beings that are morally and intellectually equipped for the dynamic synergies of our Ecozoic Age.

Traherne's moral theory offers significant theological and pedagogical insight for our age when environmental educators and care ethicists promote the morally pro-formative benefits of a child's relationship with other creatures in their natural environment. In conversation with child psychologists such as Darcia Narvaéz and Colwyn Trevarthen, Christian ethicists such as Rowan Williams, Michael Northcott and John Inge, and educational philosophers such as David Carr and Carol Gilligan, *Greening the Children*

of God articulates a constructive theological perspective on how a child's experience in the local ecology of their parish can play a pro-formative role in developing a moral identity in relationship to a caring Creator.

These moral educators, theologians, psychologists and environmentalists are responding to the call to restore the relational nexus that exists between social, scientific and moral knowledge. This study shows that Traherne's counsel to retire into creation makes a significant pedagogical impact on the formation of a child's moral identity as a creature who knows they are cared for, and are motivated to care. It represents a significant recovery of theological roots of the ethical imperative to reconnect children to their local ecology, and to attend to the childlike ways of knowing that are regaining significance in our Ecozoic age.

This recovery is an ethical imperative, because it is a question of motivation. We know the climate science and the data regarding the harsh realities of climate change. But if we are going to respond to the mandate to rectify the economic, social, political, anthropological and biological injustices that are caused by the commodification and misuse of creation, where will we derive the motivation to act in ethical ways?

At the time of publishing this book, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has entered into the phase of implementing the Paris Agreement. This agreement proposed economic and political mechanisms for addressing climate change. However the next step is perhaps the most important. Countries must introduce their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in order to make the Paris agreement operational. This stage comes at a period of time when many climate scientists, advocates and observers to the various COP and national processes are detecting a decline in the political and social will to push their governments to enact policies that will affect real change in the energy, economic, environmental, agriculture and trade sectors. We are witnessing an "Ambition Gap," or a gap between knowing what we need to do, and mustering the moral will to do it. Perhaps there is no more significant time to consider the reasons that people are motivated to take morally significant action.

As this study will demonstrate, there have always existed many theories about ethical motivation. We can be motivated ba a sense of duty to what we think is right or just. We can be motivated to act out of sheer pragmatism, or emotion, or according to an evaluation of likely consequences, or perhaps out of self-less altruism. Each of us will appeal to every one of these theories at some point in our moral deliberation, and for different reasons. However, this study will demonstrate that our fundamental concept of what it means to be human orient us towards certain ethical decisions. In other words, we

tend to care for, act on behalf of, or advocate for those with whom we closely identify. Our moral identity motivates us.

We may be motivated by rational decisions, but we go a long way to bridge the ambition gap if we help one another understand that creation is a part of us, and we are a part of creation. Our motivation to care for creation comes not only from altruism, pragmatism, duty or justice, but the knowledge that creation cares for us, because we are part of creation. And from where does that moral knowledge come? That is the fundamental question at the heart of this book, and the ethical significance of its contribution to our age.