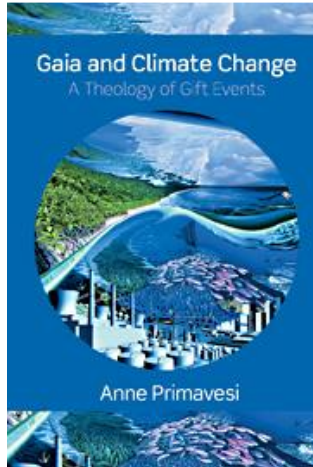


## BOOK REVIEW

**Primavesi, Anne.** *Gaia and Climate Change: A Theology of Gift Events.* Oxford: Routledge, 2009.



James Lovelock's Gaia theory revolutionized the understanding of the place and role of humans in the global environment. It is now accepted that human activities over the past two hundred years have contributed to and accelerated the extreme weather events associated with climate change. The fact that those activities materialized, for the most part, from within Western Christian communities makes it imperative to assess and to change their theological climate, which is currently one characterised by the routine use of violent, imperialist images of God.

The basis for change explored in this book is that of "gift events", particularly as evidenced in the life and sayings of Jesus. His legacy of love of enemies and forgiveness offers a basis for nonviolent theological and practical approaches to our situatedness within the community of life. These are also Gaian responses, as they include foregoing a perception of ourselves as belonging to an elect group given power by God over earth's life-support systems and over all those dependent on them, whether human or more-than-human. The degree to which we change this self-perception will determine how we affect, for good or ill, not only the givenness of the climate in future but the givenness of all future life on earth.

Thus does the publisher describe this new book from Anne Primavesi, who is a systematic theologian focusing on ecological issues, and a Fellow of the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, Birkbeck College, University of London.

This latest work from Primavesi, author of numerous works on ecology and theology, including *Sacred Gaia* (2000), *Gaia's Gift* (2003), and *Making God Laugh* (2004), is a creative and challenging analysis of the responsibility of the Church in the development of the current climate change crisis, and the role of contemporary Christians in responding to this crisis.

Primavesi distinguishes between Christendom and Christianity. She defines Christendom as "almost two millennia of the imperial power, authority and triumph of the Church". Christianity, in contrast, "re-envision[s] the (almost) forgotten witness of Jesus to the nonviolent nature of the Kingdom of God and his rejection of the kingdoms of the world and their glory".

She proposes "a contemporary re-envisioning of what it meant, and means, to be a disciple of Jesus – rather than an imperial Christian or a self-styled member of the elect.". Thought-provoking, challenging and optimistic: this is a book that deserves a slow, considered read.