

*Nature Reborn*, by H. Paul Santmire

Reviewed by [William French](#) in the [April 4, 2001](#) issue

In this fine book H. Paul Santmire explores the insights of a wide range of classical and contemporary Christian theologians and ethicists. He develops a well-balanced, constructive theology of nature that trains us to see God's grace in nature and to understand our need to live in an ecologically responsible way.

Santmire sharply critiques human-centered imbalances in Christian theology, scriptural interpretation, church life and ethics, yet he finds much that is ecologically and spiritually helpful in both the Protestant and Catholic heritages. He ranges widely across the centuries and over subjects. He suggests ways of enriching our faith through current understandings of evolution, through seeing the ecological themes in the Genesis texts and through better understandings of our intimate bond to the nonhuman living world.

Santmire argues that the ancient, medieval and Reformation churches understood baptism and the Eucharist as containing significant "cosmic" affirmations about God's real presence in the world. In a particularly moving chapter, he describes his and his wife's journey through Ireland and their encounter with themes of nature in Celtic spirituality. Mourning the death of his sister, he is borne up by the words, symbols and monastic chapels of the Celtic saints who faced death with confidence in God's active power and love in the world.