

# Book Reviews

the idea of the image of God in humans (Gen. 1:26–27) to point out that God is near. God’s presence is known even by unbelievers, because of creation and especially their humanity. Dominion over the rest of creation as expressed in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 is the main way humans express the image of God. Interestingly, while some lament humankind’s impact on nature (especially the negative effects of pollution and the human-caused extinction of other species), Frame points to this human trait as a revelation of the presence of God:

Humanity has become the dominant species on the earth, ruling in every earthly environment ... we also know [God] by knowing ourselves. He is closer to us than anyone or anything else. Every part of our mind and body reveals him ... What amazing creatures we are! How much more amazing must be the one who put us together! That one is as close to us as the mirror in which we look each day ... And from his presence we know he exists. (pp. 62–63)

After reminding us about the distortion of this image in myriad ways, Frame points us to Jesus Christ, the perfect, uncorrupted image (p. 67).

Part Two speaks of the human conscience: “The Seared Conscience,” “The Accusing Conscience,” “The Awakened Conscience,” and “The Good Conscience.” Frame examines the conscience at various stages of the human spiritual condition.

The seared conscience is the mind of the bully, the criminal, and the tyrant. People with seared consciences do not seem to be even minimally affected by moral considerations. They wish to inflict their power on others, without any limitations of morality. (p. 79)

Yet, even the seared conscience functions. It may be ignored, but it cannot be completely forgotten (Rom. 1:32). Frame writes,

When I am tempted to betray a friend, I know it is wrong. This is something I must not do ... Betrayal is not merely bad for my friend, or for me, or for the species; it is objectively bad ... only God has the authority to tell me what is objectively wrong. We may do what we can to silence the voice of conscience, even to sear it. But it will not stop speaking to us, accusing us. Within us, it makes its case for God. (p. 82)

The accusing conscience not only accuses ourselves (Rom. 2:14–15), but it accuses and excuses others. The morality of accusers is not always on target (although it often is), but the notion that everyone thinks there is a right and wrong is an evidence for God.

The awakened and the good conscience are the result of the new heart that God gives us. Our awareness of sin leads us to repentance and faith in Christ. Neither is perfect. Frame writes,

Of course, the newly awakened conscience is not perfect ... It needs to be taught and trained. (p. 94)

To say I have a good conscience is not to claim sinless perfection ... however ... the Christian, whose conscience is awakened and directed by the Spirit, is able to behave faithfully ... (p. 101)

As scientists, readers of this journal are interested in the study of creation (nature). As people of faith, they believe that God created and sustains that creation. *Nature’s Case for God* articulates a biblical way of thinking about the relationship between the two.

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**FRIEND OF SCIENCE, FRIEND OF FAITH: Listening to God in His Works and Word** by Gregg Davidson. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019. 297 pages with bibliography and index. Paperback; \$25.00. ISBN: 9780825445415.

Offering a direct and powerful rebuttal to perspectives that lead to conflict between faith and science, especially those views of young-earth creationism and intelligent design (ID), Gregg Davidson argues, in considerable detail, that scripture and the scientific views on topics such as the age of the earth and evolution are in harmony. This book is an outgrowth of years of intensive study and dialogue with advocates of many diverse views of the relationship between science and scripture. He clearly articulates the underlying principles of these views and provides ample information to support his position that science and Christian faith are in harmony.

Davidson is chair of the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering at the University of Mississippi, specializing in hydrology and geochemistry. He earned a BS in geology at Wheaton College and a PhD in geology at the University of Arizona. In addition to a few books of fiction, Davidson has authored two other books on science and faith. These are *The Grand Canyon, Monument to an Ancient Earth* (coauthored with Carol Hill, Wayne Ranney, and Tim Helble) and *When Faith and Science Collide: A Biblical Approach to Evaluating Evolution, Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Age of the Earth*, published in 2009, which is a precursor to this work. Davidson is a Fellow of the American Scientific Affiliation.

*Friend of Science: Friend of Faith* comprises fourteen chapters organized in five parts. In the first part, Davidson sets forth the manner in which he recommends issues of apparent tension between science and the Bible be addressed. He suggests that three questions be considered:

1. Does the infallibility of scripture rest on a literal interpretation of the verses in question?

2. Does the science conflict with the intended message of scripture?
3. Is the science credible? (p. 23)

Davidson illustrates this approach with the historical example of Galileo's advocacy of heliocentrism. Here the book, in an apparent attempt to keep the text simple and readable to a broad audience, oversimplifies the history. Galileo's conflict with the church leaders is presented as a pure science-faith tension, ignoring the more complex history of political and personality issues that also played a key role. Nevertheless, he clearly shows how to analyze issues of science and the Bible.

In the next three parts, he shows examples of how to apply these three questions. In Part 2 (chaps. 3–5), he focuses on the first question. In the case of the age of the earth, he argues that the literal interpretation of Genesis, generally used to contend for a young earth, fails on the basis of self-inconsistency. Rather than countering with scientific facts or alternative hermeneutics, he seeks to show young-earth creationist advocates that their position is not internally consistent. One of his many examples is the sequence of the creation of humans and animals. Genesis 1:25–26 states that the animals were created first, whereas Genesis 2:18–19 asserts that they were created after humans to seek a suitable helper. Another example discussed in chapter 4 is conflict between genealogies, showing that the message of the ancestry is more important than the literal interpretation. Chapter 3 argues for a form of accommodation in which the biblical text is considered to be written from the perspective of the scientific views of that era. The Holy Spirit accommodated the incomplete and often erroneous views of nature rather than correcting them with views that would be in accord with modern science. Chapter 5 defends a framework interpretation of the days of creation. In this view, there is a conceptual structure of the days of creation rather than a chronological sequence. Each chapter addresses the most common objections raised to these views.

The question of conflict is met head on in Part 3. The primary thrust is to claim that there is no conflict because there is concordance between the Bible and science as understood in the ancient Near East societies. In this approach, conflicts between the Bible and science are resolved by understanding the view of nature in that culture and finding concordance there, rather than with modern science. For example, Davidson shows how references to the path of the sun and to the firmament separating the waters correspond to the three-tier cosmology accepted in the ancient Near East. In doing so, he touches on all the usual arguments of the time and sequence of creation and the Flood in the time of Noah. In this way, conflict with modern science is excused

rather than resolved. Harmony is not to be found with modern science but with ancient science.

At other times, Davidson does claim that the Bible is in concordance with *modern* science. Perhaps the most telling is his effort to avoid conflict between modern genetic analysis and a historical Adam and Eve. He cites the recent work by Swamidass<sup>1</sup> and others as indicating that genetic studies do not definitively rule out the possibility of a universal ancestral couple of some kind (pp. 99–100). However, Davidson fails to note that these potential scenarios depend on a variety of assumptions: that Adam and Eve possessed an extremely unlikely and contrived DNA sequence, and/or had thousands of contemporary peers, and/or lived hundreds of thousands of years ago, long before the origin of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. For this reviewer, these assumptions strain concordant views beyond plausibility.

The longest section of the book by far is Part 4 in which Davidson presents a powerful defense of modern science. Aiming directly at the core issues of the age of the universe and the earth, the origin of life, evolution, and the origin of humans, he contends that current scientific understanding is credible and continues to grow. Davidson unabashedly maps out possible reasons why abiogenesis cannot be ruled out.

Finally, Part 5 takes direct aim at young-earth creationism, young-earth evolutionism, and intelligent design. He articulates the primary arguments for and against these views and soundly rejects them all.

Two groups of people would benefit the most from this book. On the one hand, there are those who adhere to a young-earth or ID position, but they have growing concerns and questions and are seeking alternative perspectives. This book provides extraordinary detail on virtually every argument on those issues. On the other hand, those who are already convinced of Davidson's position would benefit by gathering clarity on data and arguments that are most useful in discussions with young-earth and ID advocates. Though somewhat pedantic in spots where every possible contention is covered, the book is easy to understand by anyone with a basic interest in science. While the book contains few if any substantive new ideas, it presents a detailed and comprehensive account of ways of harmonizing science and scripture.

In the experience of this reviewer, in previous decades it was hard to find scientific experts who would take the time to systematically address the full spectrum of ideas raised in young-earth and ID literature. It is noteworthy that Davidson and others are now coming forward with clear and comprehensive coverage of the issues. This work is a valuable addition to that collection.

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## Note

<sup>1</sup>S. Joshua Swamidass, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

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## ENVIRONMENT

**BEYOND STEWARDSHIP: New Approaches to Creation Care** by David Paul Warners and Matthew Kuperus Heun, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin College Press, 2019. 252 pages. Paperback; \$17.99. ISBN: 9781937555382.

*Reforming the way we think about non-human creation  
It's not natural resources, it's kin*

We are more than the top of the creation status chain in charge of carefully using natural resources. We are brothers and sisters of animals and plants, made of the same atoms as the walls of the Grand Canyon and the pollen in a pine cone. Recognizing our role in creation leads us to reconcile with God and with the nonhuman parts of creation, a newly released book declares. *Beyond Stewardship: New Approaches to Creation Care*, edited by David Paul Warners and Matthew Kuperus Heun, takes the Christian stewardship ethic to another dimension. Written by authors connected to Calvin University and supported by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, the book is designed to help concerned Christians reframe care of the nonhuman creation in new ways.

People familiar with the Christian environmental stewardship (CES) model may recognize the concept of humans wisely using and protecting nature as a representative of God, and the use of the Hebrew words *abad* (work, till, cultivate) and *shamar* (watch over, keep) in creation care (Gen. 2:15).<sup>1</sup> A 1980 book supported by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources*,<sup>2</sup> was an important catalyst in the acceptance of stewardship responsibilities by US Christians.

*Beyond Stewardship* contends that “stewardship” suggests a person who is separated from what they oversee, making decisions in the absence of an owner, and paying attention only to economically valuable resources. Instead, the authors of *Beyond Stewardship* argue that humans are a part of the creation, in relationship with God and with the rest of creation, and, by our fundamental “creatureliness,” need to expand our sense of moral responsibility to include all of nonhuman creation. Consequently, they define other vocabulary for what is often called “creation care,” terms such

as “earthkeeping,” “place-keeping,” “kinship,” and “reconciliation.”

The book’s fourteen chapters are separated into three parts, beginning with a chapter by Heun and ending with a chapter by Warners. Each chapter begins with a compelling illustration and then pivots in a new direction, asking the reader to change to a new way of looking at a problem. A foreword by Bill McKibben, along with a preface and an introduction jointly written by both editors, sets the stage for the ideas of the book. An afterword by three authors of the original *Earthkeeping* book, an illustrated story by Calvin students, and appendices containing resources and discussion questions complete the book.

The two chapters in Part 1, Rethinking: Expanding Awareness, echo the introduction and spell out more clearly the problems of the CES model. These thoughts resonated with concerns I have had: the CES model does not protect parts of creation with low economic value, humanity is still too central to the paradigm, and we could “steward resources” without solving root problems that cause ecosystem degradation. Even so, we are told that it is important to use the vocabulary that is understood by our audience, and the best term for some is “stewardship.”

In the five chapters of Part 2, Reimagining: How Things Could Be, the book becomes a wild ride. From concepts of kinship, creatureliness, and earthiness to the idea of each of us actually being a whole symbiotic community of microbes and human body combined, the authors of this section push the reader to recognize our physicality and mortality. Humans were tasked with naming the other creatures; this understanding gives us a special relationship to them. Finitude, sin, and mutual dependence mark our relations to nonhuman parts of creation. In our individualism and desire to be like gods, we have forgotten our interdependence with the rest of the creation. The sin of pride caused the fall of humanity and warped our relationship with our fellow creatures and with the nonliving material world around us. Our grief, lament, and repentance of sin lead the way to a reconciled relationship with the rest of creation as a part of Christ’s sacrificial redemption of the whole world. That work of radical love brings the kingdom of God to Earth. Indeed, human care of the nonhuman creation is a part of an enriched understanding of the Gospel itself.

Part 3, Reorienting: Hopeful Ways Forward, consists of seven chapters. There are no quick fixes offered, but the emphases on hope and justice were welcome. Not all people are equally able to protect our world, as a story about poor tea-farm workers illustrated. In America, environmental racism causes people of color to be more exposed to toxins and to be given less opportunity to