

# Book Reviews

## 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

experience many good aspects of the nonhuman world. Lead exposure in Flint and Grand Rapids, Michigan, highlighted these problems. In spite of these things, Part 3 describes actions people can take, the value of urban areas, and the ability of humans to alter unjust systems and to envision a world of shalom based on freely given gifts—an economy of reciprocity.

*Beyond Stewardship* is a thought-provoking and well-written book. Coordination of chapter format, references by each author to other chapters, and strong editing made this book an easy read. Only about five of the authors are scientists, but the science is connected to philosophy, economics, geography, theology, and other fields so well that it is appropriate reading for Christians both inside and outside the various scientific fields.

If there are weaknesses in the book, they stem from the flip side of the writing harmony of a group of close friends and colleagues. There are (possibly mistaken) assumptions about the audience's prior knowledge of American evangelicalism and general theology. Although the preface addresses this briefly, the difference between reformed theology and other theologies was not very clear. There were also some missing voices in a book that is written about connectivity. While chapters on environmental racism, human rights, and Native American approaches to the world dealt with these topics respectfully, almost all of the chapters were written by white North Americans. Including African American voices in the reformed tradition and the theology of Native American Christians, such as Terry LeBlanc or the late Richard Twiss, was not possible with the writing of the book by this particular group of colleagues. The omission was unavoidable given the origin of the project, but still unfortunate.

*Beyond Stewardship* skirts some difficult theological problems. For example, whether Christians believe that only spiritual death, only physical death for humans, or all physical death on Earth resulted from the Fall, believers struggle with questions about the goodness of current creation. Did sin change the world so much from God's original design without death that the lion, eagle, leviathan, and shark would not have existed except for the Fall? Alternatively, were lions and hyenas fighting over food, diseases, parasites, poisonous plants, tornadoes, and snake bites actually always part of God's good creation? How you view these ideas affects what you think God expects of humans caring for the rest of creation.

There are a number of places where authors use the Bible to support a particular statement, but then do not respond to other passages that are commonly used to conclude almost the opposite. For example, *Beyond Stewardship* stresses continuity between our mortal

world, the kingdom of God, and heaven. However, the apostle Paul appears to distinguish between flesh and spirit, worldly and heavenly (for example, John 6:63, 2 Corinthians 5). Likewise, the discussion of human kinship with animals would have been strengthened by some response to the Old Testament commandments to kill animals.

Critics of creation care, such as the Cornwall Alliance,<sup>3</sup> express the belief that environmentalists are worshipping the environment, approaching pantheism, and believing New Age teaching. The Cornwall Alliance holds that care for the poor is not compatible with climate change response. These are common perceptions, but they were not addressed. Nonetheless, no book can touch on all of the questions raised by a new approach to caring for the world we inhabit. *Beyond Stewardship* has prepared us for a great deal of scholarship to come. As we approach global environmental crises, this hopeful, loving, and complex look at God and the created world is a breath of fresh air.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>All biblical references or quotes are taken from the New International Version.
- <sup>2</sup>Loren Wilkinson, ed, *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).
- <sup>3</sup>The Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation was initially The Interfaith Council on Environmental Stewardship, which published *The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship* in 2000 and took its current name in 2007. They claim that some Christians are falling into climate idolatry and that godly stewardship means dominion, continued human population increase, and continued fossil fuel use.

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## HISTORY OF SCIENCE

**ON TRIAL FOR REASON: Science, Religion, and Culture in the Galileo Affair** by Maurice A. Finocchiaro. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019. ix + 289 pages. Hardcover; \$32.95. ISBN: 9780198797920.

In 1633 Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition for holding that the earth moves, something they considered "false and contrary to Scripture." After reciting an abjuration, Galileo spent the rest of his life under house arrest. His major work, the *Dialogue on the Two Greatest World Systems*, was banned and remained on the *Index of Forbidden Books* until 1835.

Maurice A. Finocchiaro is a distinguished historian of science who has written extensively on science, religion, and culture in Galileo's day. In this book, he summarizes his earlier work and renders it accessible to a wider audience. He insists that the Galileo affair should