

Good Green Read

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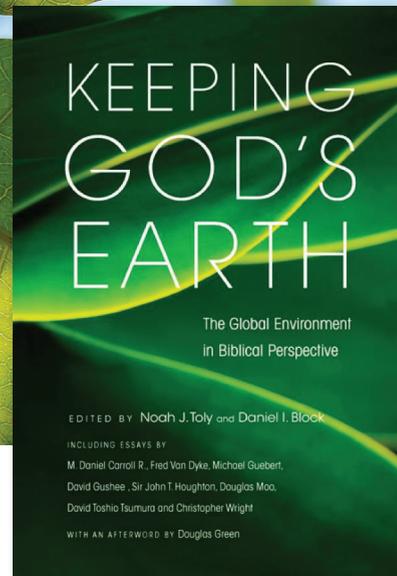
In January, I plan my spring garden and catch up on my reading, particularly books about creation care. The shelves at my local Barnes & Noble bend with books on green living, green cooking, green fashion, green building, green parenting, green weddings, green funerals—it can be mind-boggling! Some books about the environment motivate me, some terrify me, and some leave me feeling discouraged. With so much information available about environmental issues, it's hard to discern between fact and fiction. Is the climate changing? Why is biodiversity important? Aren't we supposed to use the earthly resources God has given us?

If you have similar questions, I have a good January read for you. Pick up a copy of *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, edited by Noah J. Toly and Daniel I. Block (InterVarsity Press, 2010). *Keeping God's Earth* is a collection of essays from Old and New Testament theologians, environmental policy scholars, Christian biologists, geologists, and environmental scientists. Rather than taking an either/or, science versus religion stance, this collection presents the latest thinking on biblical scholarship side by side with the latest information about climate. The authors reveal what the Bible tells us about God's plan for redeeming the earth and what the latest studies show us about the consequences of ignoring climate change.

I liked this book because I've been dissatisfied with some Christian environmentalists who offer thin arguments for going green. *Keeping God's Earth* is anything but shallow. One key message of this book is the redemption of creation. Christians should care for creation because like us, it is part of the redemption story. We should emulate God's affection for his creation, but more than that, we should care for the earth the way we care for our own bodies, which will eventually be transformed. We still have to live in these bodies, imperfect as they are, and we still have to live on earth and keep it livable for many generations.

Another theme developed in this book is biodiversity. Our earth teems with untold species, forming ecosystems that are the basis for life on earth and reflecting God's incredible imagination and creativity. Every year, thousands of species disappear because of toxins, habitat loss, or over-exploitation. Species loss not only reduces the instruments in the "cosmic symphony of praise," but also threatens the delicate balance that keeps our planet viable. Species loss should alarm us into action, encouraging us to engage with God's world and find ways to preserve it.

Keeping God's Earth contains several chapters describing the latest information about climate change, shrinking water sources, and the urgent need to build sustainable lifestyles. Some doubt the scien-



tific evidence, but John Houghton, a Christian and co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has years of research behind him and has no such doubts. Houghton is professor emeritus of atmospheric physics at the University of Oxford and a leading authority on climate change. "No other assessment on any other scientific topic has been so thoroughly researched and reviewed," he points out. His evidence for the warming world and the consequences of "business as usual" behavior gave me chills, but his Christian perspective gave me hope.

"Care for the earth is an essential way that we can display the *imago Dei* within us," he writes. "By caring for the earth, we reflect God's own loving care for the world. By seeking a sustainable future, we express love for people living throughout the world and generations yet to come.... We have been placed in a role of servant-kingship over creation, and responsible stewardship of creation recognizes that Christ has promised to return to earth—earth redeemed and transformed."

Read *Keeping God's Earth*. It challenged me to live more sustainably, but it also spurred me on to deeper worship of our amazing Creator. ■

Marianne Peters is a freelance writer living in Plymouth, Indiana.