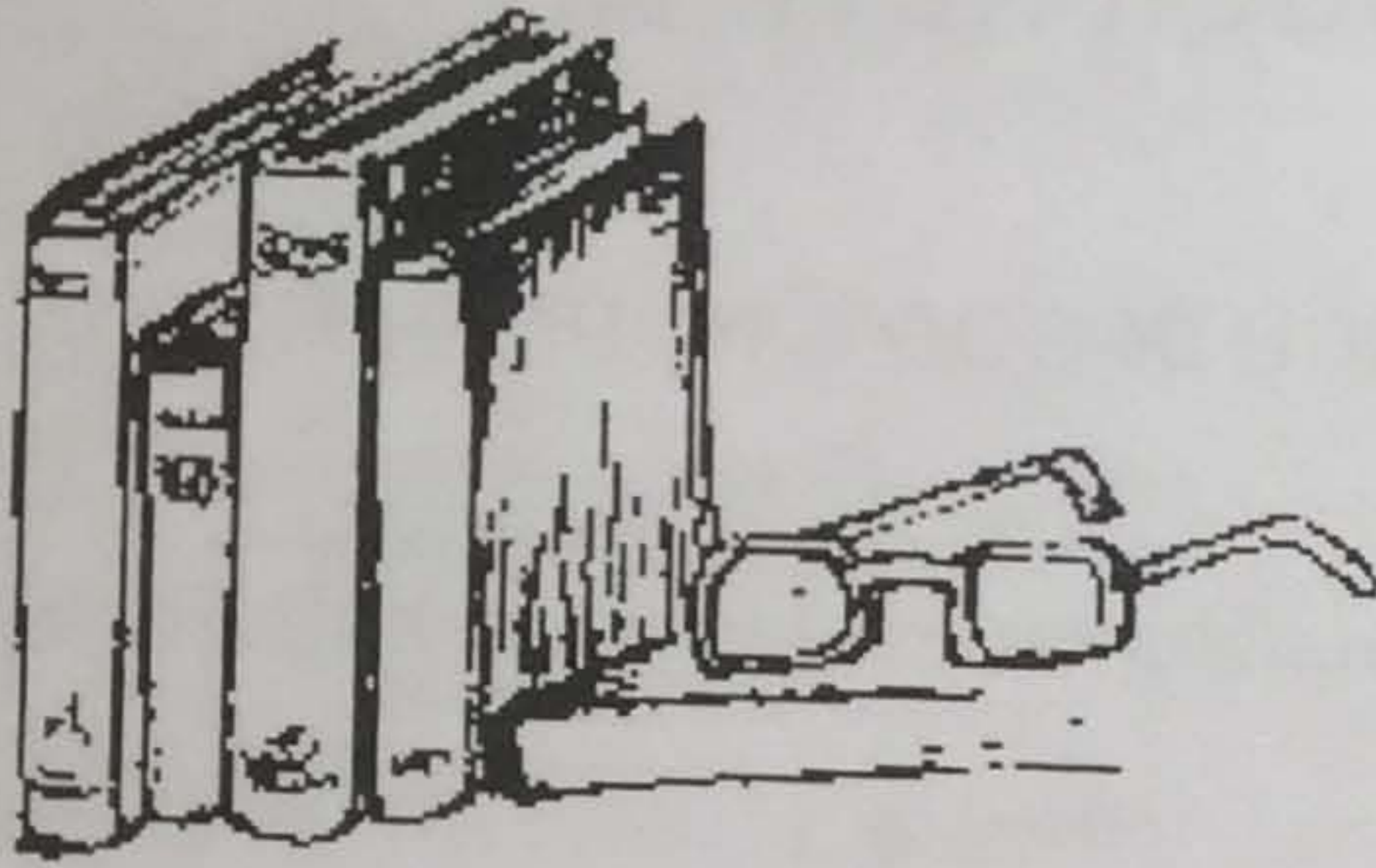


BOOK REVIEW



CREATION CARE IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

edited by

Kapya J Kaoma

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Reviewed by Matthew Seaman. *Matt lives on the Sunshine Coast, is a soldier in The Salvation Army, and secretary for the Queensland Churches Environmental Network. Through the University of Queensland, Matt is working towards a PhD that examines practical and ecological dimensions of Salvationist notions of holiness. He has two forthcoming books: **Yellow, Red, Blue and Green: Exploring Ecological Aspects of The Salvation Army**; and **Darkness and Deliverance: 125 years of the 'Darkest England' scheme.***

The centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference was celebrated throughout the Edinburgh 2010 conference.

At the close of the 2010 gathering, "the words 'see you in 2110' flashed on the screen."

In his introduction to the volume, Kaoma reflects on these words and "wonders how Christianity and the Earth would look in the next century" (1).

As contributors to both this special *Australian Journal of Mission Studies* issue and Kaoma's edited volume would likely agree, the current and future health and wellbeing of the Earth is an extremely pertinent topic for all humanity.

The extent of current and emerging human-caused ecological issues is increasing. One way in which these concerns are framed is through a trending term and its developing literature: the "Anthropocene." There are dire, even apocalyptic, scientific projections for the future health and wellbeing for humanity and God's creation.

As religion and nature scholar, Bron Taylor (2010:84), argues, "this is the first time that an expectation of the end of the known world has been grounded in environmental science."

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Yet, as Kaoma and other contributors point out, for followers of Jesus, caring for creation is not just about climatic variation and change, but is much broader.

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In light of the plethora of interrelated social, ecological, economic and spiritual issues around within the household, or *oikos* of God, Kaoma speaks for the contributors through his statement that "Christian mission cannot remain faithful to God while

ignoring the worsening depletion of life-supporting planetary ecosystems" (8).

The book chapters are distributed across three sections: Section 1 is titled *Glimpses of Hope*. Over four chapters this section contains a number of eco-mission case studies that consider and report on the practicalities of creation care from various countries such as Brazil, Norway, the United States of America and Zimbabwe. In the face of numerous ecological issues, it is wonderful to see this volume begin with a section on hope.

Section 2 contains seven papers that further explore

and reflect on ecological themes and practices from diverse denominational perspectives under the heading *Earth Care in Christian Traditions*. Over the next eight chapters, Section 3 brings together various missiological reflections around the theme of *Greening Missiology—Issues and Challenges*.

There are numerous constructive and thought-provoking themes conveyed. Ecumenical, interfaith aspects and joint ventures are explored and recounted. There are wonderful personal reflections from eco-mission projects.

Practical issues are described and explored, such as fossil-fuel divestment (for groups or individuals who have monetary investments), the ecological footprints of short term mission projects, contextually relevant and inclusive tree-planting practices, and of the importance of focussing on hope rather than guilt or fear.

The volume may be challenging or confronting for people who have not previously considered the importance of integrating ecological concerns within Christian mission. For those who have delved more deeply into the importance of mission that considers the *groans* of all of creation (Romans 8:22-23), many of the arguments may likely be familiar, yet still challenging. There are also points that are open for further debate and dialogue.

For instance, Dana Robert states that “ecological mission is not a matter for amateurs” (82). Robert continues to rightly explain that many costly ecological and social mistakes have been made by well-meaning missionaries.

Training, education, and professional expertise are important in increasing awareness and effectiveness towards minimising harm and maximising the health and wellbeing of all creation as an integral part of the practical outworking of faith. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate that the text is open to being read in an exclusionary way for non-professionals who are keen to integrate ecological work into mission.

Apart from a brief overview of Denis Edwards’ ecotheology by Amos Yong in his valuable chapter exploring a pneumatological missiology of creation, there is minimal discussion of any Australian work or context. It would have been wonderful to hear of *glimpses of hope* or further missiological explorations from Australasia, south-east Asian and Oceania contexts.

However, the broad scope of situations and perspectives that are covered within the volume is certainly positive and inspiring.

This varied collection of papers written by

practitioners and academics from a variety of locations, backgrounds and denominational affiliations under the banner of *Creation Care in Christian Missions* is a positive contribution to the conversations and practices of holistic Christ-centred mission that is mindful of and actively moving towards ecological, economic and social justice for all.

The volume provides a range of firmly grounded, yet loving and compassionate calls to action within and for the entirety of God’s loved creation, inclusive of humanity in the current climate of degradation, ecological concern and widespread injustice.

It calls us to consider and act on contextually relevant practices of theology and mission which aim to address the interrelated social, spiritual, economic and ecological issues we face together ■

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The Church in God’s Household

In the words of an influential contemporary monastic writer [Archimandrite Vasileios of Iviron, 1996] our “dominion” becomes a reality when we become “servants and slaves of creation”. Being in the image of the Master who washes the feet, the King who reigns from the cross, requires of us a level of self-emptying and sacrifice hardly to be expected of such comfortable middlemen as the steward, the keeper, or the custodian.

I found the book compelling, thoughtful and inspiring. It should be read by as many Christians as possible and is a valuable tool for preachers, teachers and leaders especially. The book includes an extensive bibliography ■

