

Hospitable Planet: Faith, Action, and Climate Change by Stephen A. Jurovics. New York, USA: Morehouse Publishing, 2016. 155 pp. ISBN 978-0-8192-3253-3

Stephen A. Jurovics is a trained engineer who has been addressing the challenges of climate change for many years. His book, *Hospitable Planet: Faith, Action, and Climate Change*, integrates his scientific and engineering knowledge with his other theological interests, mainly how various environmental laws outlined in the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) provide an argument and explanation for how Christians are obligated to care for creation. In his own words, Jurovics states that “this book seeks first to develop a similar biblical unity, not for all of Genesis through Deuteronomy, but for its teachings about the natural world. When all the environmental-related verses are taken together, what overarching perspective emerges about how we are to interact with God’s creation?” (Jurovics, 2016, p. xiv) In order to achieve this goal, Jurovics divides his book into three parts. Part I focuses exclusively on the environmental laws outlined in the Torah, which he stresses are also integrated into Jesus’ Gospel message. Part II and III focus more on explaining the details and science of climate change, while proposing concrete ways individual people, Christian communities, and governments can work together to slow down climate change.

The intended audience of this book is people who identify as a Christian but who struggle to understand and properly address the challenges of climate change. The first part of this book provides a good introduction to a basic Christian perspective concerning the relationship between humans and nature. Jurovics also offers a detailed explanation of the Torah, its major translations, and how to begin to read and interpret the religious meaning contained in the Torah’s many stories and laws. It is here where Jurovics honestly critiques Christianity as having “lost touch with the many teachings embraced by Jesus” particularly the environmental laws of the Torah which, if properly understood, he believes could help humanity realize and appreciate our connection with and dependence upon nature (Jurovics, 2016, p. 7). His survey of the Torah’s environmental laws sheds light on the traditional Judeo-Christian perspectives of the treatment of animals, kosher practices, the Year of Jubilee (when the land is given a year of rest), and warfare laws instructing that not only innocent civilians but also food bearing vegetation be spared during conflict. Jurovics also offers an environmental interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, and Noah and the flood. In these stories, Jurovics describes how humanity is being instructed to respect and care for creation, not to abuse and exploit nature. In addition to these stories, he argues that the environmental laws outlined in the Torah place further constraints on our responsibility towards the Earth as these laws direct humanity on how to care for creation (Jurovics, 2016, p. 13).

In Part II and III Jurovics offers an excellent readable explanation of the science of climate change, how it will alter the Earth, and ways for governments and individuals to begin to slow down and possibly prevent future ecological devastation. His engineering background becomes very evident in his action-oriented list of ten practical ways to change our fossil

fuel economy into a renewable and nuclear energy economy (see chapter 16: Preserving Our Home). In addition to outlining ways to slow down climate change, he also acknowledges three major challenges: governments, the energy industry, and some large corporations. In response to this reality, he calls for religious communities to join the environmental movement paralleling its example with the American Civil Rights movement. Just as the Civil Rights movement required the involvement of many people who were motivated by faith to address serious moral dilemmas, the success of the environmental movement will require “a *collective effort* formed of countless *individual spiritual/moral decisions*” (Jurovics, 2016, p. 136). The hopeful implication of Jurovics’s book is that Christians can contribute to the common good by gaining a better understanding of climate change and by participating in a dynamic environmental movement.

Jurovics’s book fits well with this journal’s special issue highlighting the relationship between faith and engaged scholarship in the new millennium. This is particularly evident in the second half of his book where he highlights how Christianity can work with local communities and the government in order to effectively address climate change. Compared with other scholarship in the field of theology and ecology, Jurovics book has a very practical focus inviting the reader to not only seriously reflect on their moral and spiritual responsibility towards creation but to begin to actively participate in the environmental movement. Unfortunately, the book does not provide an in depth look at major theological arguments for environmental ethics, the focus instead centers on a series of Scriptural references and reflections about the environmental laws outlined in the Torah. One of the book’s greatest strengths, however, is how Jurovics applies his engineering knowledge when suggesting real solutions to climate change. His in depth discussion of how individuals, communities, governments, and nations can begin to build an economy that supports rather than destroys the Earth has the ability to motivate any reader, and ideally church communities, into participating in the environmental movement. Jurovics concludes his argument calling for religious communities to become involved in the environmental movement with a strong message. Since it is *the people* who are the ‘tipping point’ for creating real change, he warns that it would be immoral for Christian communities to willfully choose to not participate in building a better future since such a choice would not only be a “spiritual/religious failure” but would also have serious ramifications for future generations who will be unfairly forced to learn to live on an inhospitable planet (Jurovics, 2016, p. 154).

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