This title is one of several anthologies to be published in the field of Christianity and Ecology in the past few years, but it focuses specifically on biblical interpretation through an ecological lens, rather than theology or church tradition, which the authors name as ecological hermeneutics. The authors throughout paint a nuanced picture of the worldview of the biblical writers, noting that people living during this time would have been close observers of the natural world, but without our modern scientific understanding of ecological destruction or our understanding of the makeup of the cosmos. Marlow and Harris write in the ‘Introduction’, ‘It is our contention that all of these issues—our dependence on the natural world, the ecological sequence of cause and effect, the humbling effect of human powerlessness in the face of environmental disaster, and our fears for the future—feature in significant ways in the Bible and are addressed in its pages’ (p. 1). They also take care to note that not all texts in the Bible are ecologically friendly. Using the terminology of the Earth Bible Project, some texts are ‘gray’ rather than ‘green’, containing ambivalent or negative views of the natural world.

Almost half of the book is taken up with chapters on specific biblical texts, along with sections on methods, thematic studies, and contemporary issues. Part One, ‘Issues and Methods’, contains essays on the development of the field of ecological hermeneutics and lays out some of the main methodological perspectives that different scholars use. This section includes an essay of ‘Ecological Feminist Hermeneutics’ by Anne Elvey as well as ‘Ecological Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism’ by Madipoane Masenya, both welcome contributions to a field that has until recently mostly ignored the perspectives of women and people of color.

Part Two, ‘Specific Biblical Texts’, is the heart of the book and contains thirteen essays on biblical books, with nine from the Hebrew Bible and four from the New Testament, including books from the Torah, the Prophets, Psalms and Job, the synoptic gospels, and Paul’s epistles. Many of the authors write from the paradigm of the Earth Bible Project, pioneered by Norman Habel, which foregrounds the retrieval of the voice of the earth itself as an active character and an eye towards ecojustice principles (p. 23). I particularly appreciated the essays on the Song of Songs by Ellen Bernstein and the Gospel of John by Susan Miller because they covered texts outside the usual ecotheology ‘canon’ of Genesis, Psalms, Job, and Leviticus.

Part Three, ‘Thematic Studies’, addresses biblical concepts of the natural world, including ecological sustainability, city life, and attitudes towards nature in
the Ancient Near East. One particularly interesting essay, ‘The Sea and Ecology’ by Rebecca Watson, discusses the sea in the Bible. Though marine life would have been central to the diets and livelihoods of the Ancient Israelites, most texts in religion and ecology ignore marine ecology in favor of land-based concerns. I was also intrigued by the essay entitled ‘City as Sustainable Environment’ by Mary Mills, where she investigates the city (defined as a walled enclave) as a symbolic landscape in the Bible and the urban-rural divide. Part Four, ‘Contemporary Issues and Perspectives’, applies biblical texts to modern environmental issues, including climate change denial, theological perspectives on animals, wildlife conservation, and both Jewish and Evangelical perspectives on ecotheology.

There is much to appreciate in this hefty anthology of ecological hermeneutics. It is very thorough, devoting significant space to the biblical books themselves and highlighting several different methods of interpretation. These are clearly laid out in the second chapter, along with the limitations of ecological hermeneutics. The anthology also features the voices of both Jewish and Christian scholars from many different countries and theological traditions. One main downside, however, is the almost complete lack of voices of indigenous scholars as well as scholars from the Global South. Only one essay is written by an African scholar, ‘Ecological Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism’ by Madipoane Masenya. Many of the essays do touch on Indigenous perspectives as part of their argument, but the lack of inclusion is disappointing given that there are many BIPOC scholars in the field of ecotheology publishing outstanding work.

Overall this is an excellent text for graduate students and upper-level undergraduates that provides a thorough exploration of the emerging field of ecological hermeneutics.

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