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## Book Review

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Grace Ji-Sun Kim (ed.), *Making Peace with the Earth: Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2016), 274pp., \$25.00 (pbk), ISBN: 978-2-8254-1668-6.

The purpose of this book is to share the lived experience of Christian denominations regarding action on climate change and climate justice. Across a range of Protestant and Orthodox voices, in 18 chapters and an epilogue, the salience of 'climate justice' and 'caring for creation' were repeatedly emphasized. The collection arose from meetings of the Climate Change Working Group associated with the World Council of Churches. The WCC—a worldwide ecumenical organization of 349 global, regional and sub-regional, national, and local churches, representing nearly a half-billion of the world's 2.2 billion Christians—has been heavily involved in environmental issues since the 1960s and climate since the 1980s. In fact, the term 'sustainability' may have been coined by Charles Birch at a 1974 meeting of the WCC (p. 234). Since the Rio Earth Summit in 2002, the WCC has maintained regular religious involvement at UN climate meetings. As several chapters point out, faith-based groups are significant actors in civil society, albeit playing quite different roles in different societies. The WCC is the largest organization so far to pledge divestment from fossil fuels.

According to the editor, Canadian theologian Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Christian groups address climate change for two main reasons. First, churches recognize the impact of climate change and mobilize to address its effects out of faith-based values. Second, churches work together and build networks of action. Contributor Elias Abramides, active since before the Rio Summit, says the WCC is involved because of the universal scope of climate change and religious faith, to be voice of the voiceless, and 'to call negotiators' attention to issues of justice, ethics, morality, solidarity, and equity' (p. 86). Religious groups, and the WCC more specifically, were among the earliest and most influential voices calling for climate equity at a time when the issue was presented almost exclusively in scientific and technical policy terms.

The contributions are heavily weighted to Europe, plus two each from North America, Korea, and India (one is Hindu, the only clearly non-Christian contribution, although other contributions represent interfaith work), and one each from Palestine and South Africa. Written by a group of church leaders and theologians, this book has a more practical than scholarly focus. Numerous chapters report on denominational initiatives, such as the Church of Sweden's Environmental Diploma for Sustainable Development, or certification of 'eco-congregations' in the Church of Scotland, the

nature-based and peacemaking programmes of an Environmental Education Centre run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, or campaigns by Indigenous activists against tourism and accompanying ecological impacts in India. One chapter, 'Art for Climate Justice', presents a striking example on the cover of the book, which makes the black and white photographs in the chapter all the more frustrating. The author expressed that 'While much of this work is pragmatic and managerial (there is little spiritual about caring for a heating boiler), it remains rooted in faith and is driven by a commitment to care for creation' (p. 29).

As that statement indicates, there is a mundaneness in the work of advocating and acting for sustainability, so perhaps this book's value is helping scholars to be more aware of this and perhaps be more willing to study the mundane and prevalent as well as the exotic. Still, there are conceptual innovations, such as the contrast between the two chapters expressing the adaptation of Christianity to Korean culture. Both work to contextualize Christianity within Korean culture and both address colonization, but then use very different elements of that culture to advocate care for creation. This approach provides readers with new ways of considering the heaven–earth–human relationships through 'rice as heaven[ly]' (Chung) or the saving, sharing, exchanging, and reusing of energy articulated by the Korean women's movement known as *salim* (Oh). Another chapter articulates the concept of a 'greed line' (as opposed to a poverty line) and a methodology to calculate it. Emphasis on greed may be a far more valid focus for faith groups than the governmental attention to mere poverty lines. Considering that science shows human utilization of Earth's bounty already exceeds global ecological capacity, greed—defined here as 'the desire to have more than one's legitimate share of material goods and power' (p. 135)—directs us toward global justice and redistribution rather than charitable work towards poverty reduction.

Interested readers will also be able to parse the discourses of Christian churches about what is considered 'making peace with creation'. Peace is never really conceptualized nor is the question raised about what is causing violence against the earth. This is unfortunate because a peace-making focus represents a very different paradigm from stewardship or even creation-care, and peace has traditionally been a human-centred praxis. Thus, Christian discourses remain benevolently anthropocentric in this collection, such as in the claim that the basis of theological reflection is that 'responsibility for creation was that of violation of good neighbourhood principles as well as misgoverning of the planet that was offered to humans' (p. 36). Similarly, the concept of justice rarely seems to extend to the earth itself (or creation, or nature—terms used interchangeably throughout). Of better value are the ongoing reflections on sources of hope in the face of climate crisis.

In the epilogue, Ernst Conradie provides his own summary of the book, pointing out that the churches are not just civil society organizations but have their own particular contributions (and agendas): 'The danger here is not merely one of self-secularisation by focusing on the ethical significance of the Christian faith while underplaying its particular content... The danger is also that churches may fail to make a contribution to global efforts to address climate change that only they can make' (p. 239). He points out that the contribution of churches is 'still open for debate' (p. 239). Conradie examines trends among the other contributions and points out that there is plenty of attention to justice, but word counts show faith, love, or joy hardly mentioned. Finally, he concludes with 'a pertinent question: what character traits of

God are appropriate in the context of climate change? Should one invoke the fierce, almighty, holy One or the vulnerable, broken, despised One?' (p. 246). These elements of practical ministry, theology, and creation justice are important questions to be pursued more aggressively by scholars.

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