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Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (eds.). *The Earth Story in Genesis. The Earth Bible, Volume 2.* Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000. Pp. 236. No Price Listed.

[1] This second volume of The Earth Bible project includes fifteen essays, including one by Indigenous Australian Wali Fejo. The contributors continue the practice of reading biblical texts with an Earth-based hermeneutic that is guided by six ecojustice principles outlined at the beginning of the volume. The two principles most often used are: (1) the principle of intrinsic worth of the Earth and its components, and (2) the principle of interconnectedness of all living things. At the outset, the Earth Bible Team acknowledges that their use of these principles, in conjunction with other historical and literary methods, results in interpretations that are value-laden, not value-neutral. As socially-located readings, these essays offer both critiques of and alternatives to the dominant and often Earth-negating messages in the biblical texts.

[2] Their Earth-based hermeneutic mandates that the Earth be regarded as subject, rather than object, of the text. Norman Habel, for example, argues that the story of human creation (Genesis 1:26-30) represents not the climax of God's creation, but "a sharp conflict of plot and perspective within the narrative" (35). Indeed, he asserts that "geophany" and "anthropophany" stand in ecological tension. Until the creation of humans, the Genesis 1 creation story emphasizes the two principles noted above. However, power relations change when humans are authorized to rule over other creatures and subdue the Earth.

[3] Carol Newsom denounces a similar type of anthropocentrism in the Genesis 2-3 creation story. The initial interconnectedness of all creation (i.e. the common *adamah* material of both the human and the animals) falls apart when the humans' eyes are opened. Citing J. B. Callicott, Newsom maintains that such human self-awareness distinguishes the humans from the animals. She goes on to assert that the fall into anthropocentrism represents "if not the root of all sin, at least of all ecological sin" (62). Newsom concludes her essay with an acknowledgement that "sin" is not the only outcome of the story. The text should remind us that we have the ability to make choices for the benefit of all creation.

[4] Other contributors likewise challenge and redefine traditional theological assumptions. Drawing on the work of American conservationist Aldo Leopold, Gene McAfee argues that the Abrahamic concept of land "constitutes little less than a second fall of humankind" (159). God's promise to Abraham of land and progeny redirects the blessings of fertility originally granted to all humanity to one specific people, i.e. Abraham and his descendants. Thus, the initial concern for biological reproduction as a means of survival is transformed into divine justification for social reproduction as a means for cultural dominance. This distinction "pit(s) the fertility of the chosen group against the fertility of non-chosen groups" so that "reproduction becomes an instrument of colonization" (160).

[5] Suzanne Boorer also examines the Priestly texts that deal with the promise to Abraham. While acknowledging the objectification of the land as something to be bought and sold, Boorer argues that a closer reading shows that "the land is intrinsically valued, at least by God, with its protection a central theme in the unfolding of P's thought" (175). To support her more optimistic reading, Boorer analyzes the Numbers 13-14 spy story. Because all the spies except Joshua and Caleb return with an unfavorable report about God's "good" land, they bring death and destruction to the first generation of Israelites. Boorer concludes that "although the land promised to the ancestors and Israel (Gen 17:8) is a possession granted by God and to be owned by Israel, it is not given to them by God if they do not appreciate, value and respect it properly" (185). Thus, Boorer claims God's punishment resulted from the people's lack of respect for the Earth, rather than their lack of trust in God to provide and protect them in the promised land.

[6] As I read through the essays, I found myself saying "OK, but . . ." I wanted to find evidence that supported an ecojustice reading that valued the Earth and all its components. As a vegetarian, I wanted John Olley to show me how the text of Genesis 9 could provide something other than an answer of "yes" to the question he raised at the beginning of his essay - "have animals been kept through the flood simply to be human food supply, ruthlessly treated by humans?" OK, I agree that God's post-flood covenant with all creation, including the animals and the Earth, shows the egalitarian nature of God's promise. But, I am not convinced that this means that God is giving "animals more dignity and importance than simply the values they have for humans" (138).

[7] My "OK, but . . ." response forced me to think about the purpose of the book as well as the many implications of socially-located interpretations. Like some feminist interpreters who focus on one particular aspect of a text (usually women), the contributors to this volume focus on elements of the text that reflect the six ecojustice principles. In so doing, they typically acknowledge that the majority voice in the text is not that of the Earth, but of those who regard the Earth and the other non-human components of creation as something to be used and abused. What the contributors want to show is that a more eco-friendly reading is possible, although, as Howard Wallace acknowledges, it would be "unreasonable to assume that the writers of the passage, in their own social, economic and agricultural contexts, would have given much consideration to the place of the earth in the creation story" (55). Given what we continue to learn about these texts and their many contexts - and given that the texts themselves require us to re-evaluate them in light of changing social, political, and environmental circumstances - I am open to and appreciative of interpretations that can legitimately offer a new and more liberating perspective on these ancient texts.

Kudos to all the contributors who provide new ways of reading these texts and who challenge us to be more attentive to the Earth and all its components.

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