

the financialization and globalization of the economy—was ignored. In fact, questions of financial ethics were extremely limited. That may have been a conscious editorial decision given the complexities of the issues.

Overall, I would hope that this volume is widely read and used as the editors suggested. It brings the teachings of the Church to a lay audience in a usable way. If those teachings are applied consistently, they will greatly improve our economic and social life.

—Christine M. Fletcher  
*Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois*

## Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology

**Joshtröm Kureethadam**

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014 (388 pages)

This book joins a host of volumes in the past decade that promise to build or refine a Christian position on environmental ethics. Joshtröm Kureethadam provides a unique point of view as a Catholic priest and professor of the philosophy of science at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. His primary interest within his discipline is cosmology, which is demonstrated in the first chapter of the volume. The overall purpose of the book is worthwhile; it “is an attempt to frame our understanding of the contemporary ecological crisis by offering a broader and more holistic view of the problem” (7). Kureethadam pursues this end through an interdisciplinary approach.

*Creation in Crisis* is divided into four parts. After a brief introduction, Kureethadam makes the case in the two chapters of part 1 that humans are destroying the environment. First, he presents a brief cosmology, explaining the wonder of a finely tuned planet that alone meets the needs for human life to arrive billions of years after the physical universe originated in the Big Bang. Then he decries the irrationality of destroying the ecological balance of that one and only home planet. His emphasis is the brevity of human existence and the hubris that has led human beings to have such an outsized effect on the environment in such a short time span. Part 2 moves to a more narrow focus on the current ecological conditions. The four chapters of this section exegete the commonly accepted data relating to climate change, its impact on the environment, biodiversity, and resource depletion. Kureethadam carefully presents extensive scientific research, making few, if any, ethical or theological claims in these four chapters.

Part 3 outlines the unbalanced impact of climate change on the poor. To make this point, Kureethadam first explains the consensus expectations for the economic effects of climate change. He then suggests reasons why these catastrophic consequences of human excess will continue to reinforce injustice by more significantly impacting the poor. In part 4, Kureethadam presents a theological case for environmentalism. He argues from a sacramental view of the doctrine of creation for the sacredness of the earth. It thus follows that the earth must be preserved. The final chapter of the book closes by making a case that poor stewardship of the earth is a category of sin. Therefore, conversion from and repentance of ecological sin is a necessary, logical conclusion.

This presentation of the science, ethics, and theology of the current ecological condition has very little unique content. Kureethadam's chief contribution is to bring several disciplines together by summarizing the arguments for environmental activism from cosmology, climate science, social justice, and the doctrine of creation. There are few books on the market that bring such diverse fields together with integrity. This is the chief strength of *Creation in Crisis*.

There are also several significant weaknesses. First, although Kureethadam touches on various disciplines, his emphasis on climate data and cosmology comprise about two-thirds of the book. His analysis of theology and ethics does not present thorough theological reflection. For example, in the bulk of the volume, Kureethadam so strongly emphasizes that humans are latecomers to the ancient earth that he raises questions about the theological anthropology behind the scientific observations. As Kureethadam writes, "Earth can exist without modern humans, as it has done for over 99.9 percent of its history, but we cannot exist without the earth" (5). This, along with the evolutionary account of human origins presented in the volume, seems to undermine a robust understanding of the *imago Dei*. Thus, when Kureethadam introduces the theological concept of human stewardship in the final chapter of the book, the responsibility he assigns to humankind does not seem to match his presentation of humans as a late-arriving, alien species.

Perhaps the most significant weakness of this book is an underdeveloped presentation of the tension between God's transcendence and his immanence. In making his argument for the sacredness of the earth, Kureethadam moves dangerously close to pantheism by arguing for "God's in-dwelling presence in creation" (300). He attempts to distinguish between pantheism and an "incarnational spirituality" (305), but his categories are not sufficiently clear. There is an extensive Catholic theological tradition of sacramentalism. Such a doxological understanding of human participation in all life is helpful in combating functional dualism. However, the tension between God's immanence and his transcendence must be carefully maintained. Moving from God's continued providence in creation to his incarnational participation in the created order does not warrant the reduction of God's transcendence as is permitted (though not required) by this presentation.

*Creation in Crisis* is an attempt at the worthy goal of presenting a holistic view of human responsibility to current environmental conditions. However, in a field crowded with literature from religious and nonreligious perspectives, this volume does little to advance the discussion. It is an impressive compendium of interdisciplinary research but has little to commend it to readers outside the discipline of environmental ethics.

—Andrew J. Spencer

*Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina*