

## Book review

Matthew D. Hickman

*Earth Trek: Celebrating and Sustaining God's Creation*, by Joanne Moyer. Waterloo, ON, and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004.

**H**istorically Anabaptists have had a hard time articulating a theology of creation. Having shifted rather early on to a spiritualist theology of redemption, the majority of our Anabaptist forebears came to believe that the earth and its human power structures would be annihilated at the end of days. This shift was in part a response to persecution and a reaction against the exploits of violent, politically revolutionary Anabaptists. And yet because of their belief that God's kingdom had already been inaugurated by Jesus, most Anabaptists continued in practice to follow the impulse toward stewardship of the material world, clinging to the affirmation that the earth is the Lord's. This tendency was most visible in Anabaptist economic and agricultural practices.

Many Mennonites today are asking anew how their faith should inform the way they live in a material world. To those seekers, I commend *Earth Trek*—a Mennonite Central Committee publication from Herald Press, written by Joanne Moyer—as an invaluable primer on creation care. *Earth Trek* is a multiweek curriculum for individuals or small groups, organized thematically by the days of the Genesis creation story. Within each thematic day are four to six sessions, which address ecology, faith, spirituality, and taking action.

The theological foundation of *Earth Trek* is an affirmation of the primitive Anabaptist eschatological conviction that God's kingdom has already come in part and will come fully on this earth, which will be redeemed. Here, briefly, is the perspective offered: creation belongs to its sovereign God, who called it good. Humanity is charged with a special vocation of stewardship within the created order. Humanity is inseparable from creation, which flourishes or decays as a result of human obedience or sinfulness. Humans serve creation under the

ultimate rule of God. Salvation includes the redemption of the earth. And finally, Jesus Christ is both the agent of creation and the agent of redemption.

The ecology sections are an excellent introduction to ecological processes and concerns. The biblical material is representative of core biblical texts that speak specifically to creation's relationship to both God and humanity. The spirituality sections include scriptures, poetry, and prayers. Especially useful in shaping personal and corporate responses to the readings are the many practical suggestions at the end of each session. Many of the suggested actions can be done the same day, but some—such as replumbing your house to dispose of wash water and bath water (grey water) apart from sewage (black water)—require longer term commitment and expense.

Written in a devotional style, the content of *Earth Trek* is broadly accessible. Admittedly, it took a while to orient myself to the book. Innovative page and text layouts compromise readability. Use of multiple fonts in different sizes and styles seems to be a

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hallmark of postmodern publishing, but it causes visual disorientation. In my opinion, noncapitalization of titles and headings is best left to ee cummings. Sequential numbering of the weeks that continued through (rather than restarted with) each thematic day would have aided orientation to the book's structure. I was surprised at the lack of color and imagery; they would have added to the appeal of this book on creation care, and

could also have aided comprehension in the ecology sections. The latter are well researched but lean toward being heavy on data.

Buy this exceptional book and read each session thoughtfully. But then, lest you miss the point, put it down and go outside. Take time to meet your creature and plant neighbors. As Sallie McFague, quoted in the book's introduction, says, "We cannot love what we do not know."

### **About the reviewer**

Matthew Hickman is completing an MDiv at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and volunteers in land management and habitat restoration at Mennonite camps.