

*Coming to Faith Through Dawkins* comprises twelve essays, written by men and women with varying backgrounds from accomplished academics to micro-dosing hippies and everything in between. This broad collection indicates that Dawkins and his atheist popularizers might still have a place in the cultural conversation that ironically is bringing people to faith. Although the title is provocative, not every essay is directly a *coming to faith story* because of Dawkins alone. Instead, the book is composed of real people inviting the reader into their journey to faith in God through the Four Horsemen—who, instead of ushering in an apocalypse of unbelief, brought about in these contributors a turning point to find peace and salvation in Jesus Christ. Although the twelve journeys to faith are distinct, there are key themes that emerge and tie the collection together quite powerfully in the current cultural moment.

First, the stories have not been evangelically sanitized. Unlike a cheesy Hallmark movie that ties up all the loose ends with characters that no one except Ned Flanders can relate to, the contributions are refreshingly honest—a feature lacking in the New Atheist literature. These essays are more like reading the Bible—the stories are of real people and, like real life, are messy. What they show is that a journey to faith is not always a straight line, nor altogether complete; there are loose ends, which is, ironically, juxtaposed to the New Atheist plotline that unbelief has it all figured out. These essays are an invitation into the mind and heart of honest people who came to Jesus and are still journeying with God. As expressed in these narratives, faith does *not* mean that you have all your questions answered, nor that you will not have new questions to ask along the way, nor that doubt is not a real part of life.

Second, these stories masterfully show faith as a journey, best traveled in honesty and humility—something the contributors did not find in the works of Dawkins or Hitchens, who are known for their rhetorical wit and provocative prose. Taking aim at the hubris of the religious, the New Atheist's pride and rebukes became their own worst enemies. Although some people were drawn to their strawman attacks and cheered their ad hominem triumphs, this same condescending tone led many of the contributors to this book to reconsider the validity and veracity of the New Atheists' arguments ... or lack thereof. This volume clearly shows that people are looking for honest discussions, presented with the graciousness of mind that comes from those who realize they could be wrong and are willing to face their own doubts.

Lastly, this book is a much-needed encouragement; God is at work in the most stubborn, hostile, and distant of people. From tears to laughter, these essays remind Christians of the importance of sharing our faith and lovingly engaging with people. It must be said that William

Lane Craig is a consistent voice in this collection, who encouraged people not only by his clarity of thought but also by his respectful engagement, something the world needs now, more than ever.

*Reviewed by Andy Steiger (PhD, Aberdeen), founder and executive director of Apologetics Canada.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

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**FOLLOWING JESUS IN A WARMING WORLD: A Christian Call to Climate Action** by Kyle Meyaard-Schaap. InterVarsity Press, 2023. 208 pages. Paperback; \$18.99. ISBN: 9781514004456.

If you, or a Christian friend, are unsure of the appropriate faith response to climate change, this just might be the book to read. If you have been involved with Christian creation care for a while and want to see what the next generation of leaders has to offer, read the book.

The Reverend Kyle Meyaard-Schaap has plenty of experience guiding people through the process of integrating their faith with creation care—from his work with Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, to vice president of the Evangelical Environmental Network, to his current position as the executive director of the Association for a More Just Society in the US. He is ordained in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Meyaard-Schaap loves to tell stories throughout the book and does it well. That gives the book an informal but engaging feel. It is a straightforward read: you will not be reaching for a theological or scientific dictionary; you will not have to interpret any charts or graphs. The book covers a wide swath of material in a few pages so, by its design, it is an introductory book. It would serve that purpose better if it pointed the reader to additional readings at the end of each chapter. The book makes extensive use of the Bible; these references should appeal to an evangelical audience, although a scriptural index would have been helpful.

The introduction covers the consensus around climate change, a history of the recent meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the temperature goals that were set at the twenty-first meeting in Paris, and how our actions are inadequate to meet those goals. The key question this book attempts to answer is: How are we supposed to respond to this reality as followers of Jesus?

In the first chapter, "Coal and the Greatest Commandment," Meyaard-Schaap uses a story of an activist against mountaintop removal coal mining to review the associated environmental issues while introducing us to the coal miners, as well as their families and friends. Their culture gives them meaning and pride in what they

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do, yet the health issues they experience cannot be minimized. The author examines the complexities of God's greatest commandments as they relate to the people and the mountain.

The second chapter, "How Did We Get Here?," explores the power of story in shaping all aspects of our lives, including faith and politics. The author tells how evangelicalism became associated with Republican politics as well as the politics of oil and big tobacco, and the idea that Earth is temporary. "When this political story is combined with a theological story ... climate action is more often than not seen as a partisan threat, a theological heresy, and a dangerous conspiracy—a wild deviation from the stories that have formed them" (p. 35).

Chapter 3, "Recovering the Big Story," examines the relationship between the earth, God, and humans as told in Genesis, Job, John, Colossians, and Revelation. Briefly, God creates a universe that is good and puts humans in the garden to serve and protect the garden. However, as we all know, humans fail miserably in this task and require frequent reminders about God's covenant with all of creation and their role in caring for it. This chapter should whet the appetite of the evangelical reader who regards the Bible as authoritative.

The next chapter, "Climate Action Is Good News," explores some big questions: What is the role of evangelism in a warming world? For whom is the Gospel good news? The author concludes that if we follow the example of Jesus, the Gospel should be good news even for those "bent low by the impacts of a changing climate" (p. 70). Advocating for environmental justice becomes a foretaste of the kingdom to come and it provides an opportunity to share his name and message.

Chapter 5, "Being Pro-Life in the Age of Climate Chaos," deals with the multitude of ways that climate change is affecting and killing people around the world: for example, from the farmer in Kenya, the nine million deaths worldwide due to air pollution, the possibility of pandemics, and more. The poor and those unable to respond to the challenges disproportionately bear the burden of climate change effects. The conclusion: we need to "drastically expand our understanding of what it means to be pro-life" (p. 92).

In chapter 6, "A Story Can Change the World," Meyaard-Schaap advances the thesis that sharing our climate change story is important. But why is it important that we as individuals share our personal stories? We listen to those we trust. Who shares the story is more important than the details of the story. But to be effective we must also listen to the stories of those we are trying to influence. This way we can relate our concerns to their concerns. The chapter shares Katharine Hayhoe's three steps for engaging in effective conversations about

climate change: find something you have in common, connect climate change to it, and find a way forward you can agree on.<sup>1</sup> To this, the author suggests we need to add an invitation for action.

The next chapter, "God's Pleasure, Our Joy," focuses on how to sustain advocacy. The author suggests finding a community that allows us to find joy and gratitude, as well as practicing simplicity as a spiritual discipline of climate action. Appendix A gives additional examples of lifestyle changes, including activism. However, he neglects the concept of eco-spirituality; from dialogue with Indigenous peoples to modifications of Ignatian spiritual exercises, this is an active area of exploration within the Christian church.

Chapter 8, "Loving Our Neighbors in Public," addresses the systemic nature of climate change. After a historical review, the author argues that the systems in place are not neutral; they have brought us to the current situation, benefiting some, and hurting others. Because of systemic injustices, Christians must "do justly now." This chapter gives specific and concrete examples of how to engage politically: writing an op-ed piece (with more detail in appendix B), using social media, and yes, of course, voting.

The final chapter, "Christian Citizenship in a Warming World," explores engagement consistent with scripture that is other oriented and Christlike. Meyaard-Schaap suggests that being in a supportive community and anchoring ourselves in spiritual practices are important for keeping God in control, and not our ego, so that others may see the fruits of the Spirit.

Overall, this is a good initial book for understanding a Christian approach to climate change. I wouldn't hesitate to give it to someone who is getting started on their creation care journey. For those who have been involved in the creation care movement for a while, the suggestions for engagement in chapter 8 are well worth reviewing before taking pen to paper or dialing up your congressional representative. The stories are well told, insightful, and memorable. There are many places in this book where references could be made to those who have gone before, who have created the insights that are now standard. But this is not a full academic treatise. It is the responsibility of each generation to take what has gone before and put it into the language and idiom of the current generation. That is how the work continues. Judged in that way, this is a valuable contribution to what it means to be a Christian in a world that is endangered by human-created climate change.

## Note

<sup>1</sup>Katharine Hayhoe, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* (One Signal, 2021), 225.

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