

Review of 'The Biblical Mandate for Caring for Creation' by Dick Tripp

In '*The Biblical Mandate for Caring for Creation*' by Dick Tripp, the author achieves exactly what he says on the cover, making the case for the why the Church and Christians should care for creation so comprehensively and persuasively that it is hard to ignore. I would go so far as to say this book could change the way you live your life.

Tripp's analysis is well researched; grounded in a thorough examination of the Scriptures and drawing on the insights of an extensive range of well respected theologians (as well as secular sources in the first section). Essentially in three sections – world environmental problems, how creation links to God and what the Church can do about it – the book flows well, carrying the reader with it on an enlightening journey, examining the issues with insight and immediacy. Most chapters are self-contained and so the book may also be dipped in and out of. It will be a very practical resource in aiding sermons on the topic.

'*Caring for Creation*' begins with a detailed overview of how human beings are damaging God's creation. The church has regrettably often been a passive bystander or even an active participant or encourager of environmental abuse and neglect because we have misunderstood God's loving intentions towards His creation. Tripp reveals how wrong we have often got it.

He then moves on to the topic that interested me most: an examination of nature from God's perspective. He reveals directly from the Scriptures the intimate, committed, joyous and loving relationship God has with his creation, a mystical relationship in which creation sings His praises, claps and shouts out God's glory but which also groans, waits, expects and hopes for promised renewal. We are inspired us to feel the same joy and responsibility for creation that, as Tripp points out, God clearly had when He made it and as He continues to sustain it.

Tripp encourages us to see the state of the earth in a new light by relating it to the original purposes of God and His love for it. From Genesis to Revelation, Tripp draws from and reveals the consistency of Gods message about nature throughout the whole of Scripture. From creation itself to the story of Noah God when ensured the survival of all living creatures, to the principles for sustainable living found in the laws, the insights of the psalms and prophets of the Old Testament it has been before our eyes all along. Again in the New Testament we see the consistency in Jesus' relationship with nature and his use of natural examples in His teaching and miracles.

Tripp also highlights the important connection between human disobedience to God and the health of the natural order. Nature has suffered because of our fall. It is not fallen because of any fault of its own. Rather it is the innocent victim of our disobedience but carries the consequences of our fall. We have mistaken dominion for domination and frustrated nature, at times causing it to be punished for our disobedience as God's judgments have at times, had severe environmental consequences. Tripp points out that when the Bible refers to the 'healing the land', it comes about by repentance and returning to God – not primarily by downsizing, recycling or resource management (not that these are not important). Our neglect of

nature is a moral dilemma. Our spiritual welfare is intimately related to the well-being of all creation and vice versa.

It becomes clear that if we are to be like Christ and partner fully with God in His purposes, we must also have this intimate relationship with God's creation in order to fulfill our responsibilities. It is not an option. Whereas sin distorted our relationship with nature, Jesus is the perfect model for caring for nature. Nature should matter to us because it matters to God. The glory of God is revealed through nature – how could Christians not want to sustain it?

Importantly Trip clearly shows from careful examination of the Scriptures, that we must rid our selves of the unfounded idea that creation will one day be destroyed and recognise instead that God is as committed to creations' redemption and renewal (salvation as rescue, for nature has not sinned but suffered at our hands) as He is committed to ours. A focus on the new (renewed) earth at His second coming should inspire us to "live as if we were already there". We deserve better for ourselves and for God than to accept the world as in decline. As Tripp says "The fact that His will one day will be done on earth, should encourage us to greater effort, rather than leading to complacency".

So in the final section '*Caring for Creation*' gives us a way forward so we can take up our God ordained role as carers for and keepers of the earth, taking the delight in it that God takes. God invites us to be His partners in this work. Tripp adds to the 3R's of reduce, reuse and recycle another three: Resist (overconsumption), restore and rejoice. Our attitude towards nature in a spiritual sense and how we should be behaving towards it in practical ways is fundamental to how we go about living authentic Christian lives. Ultimately hopeful, this book lets us envisage a brighter future – it is possible!

This is big picture stuff. Tripp reveals biblical truth in a fresh revelation. We should care for creation not because it is our duty or out of obedience but because we desire to, because we understand creation as intrinsically good, it as a gift of great value, because it reveals our God to us. We must begin to grasp the vast greatness of God's plan for the future in which He will (and has already started to) reconcile all things to himself. We must grasp the mystical vibrant wholeness and the unity of all things in relationship. We, much, much more than the secular world, have been given a wonderful vision. The whole of creation is to be renewed in perfect relationship with its creator. We can understand nature differently; we have the knowledge to follow the right path.

If you read this book you will never treat the earth disrespectfully again. It will change the way you think and act; you will feel more complete in your understanding of God and His purposes. For an intellectual book, it is reader friendly and has a surprisingly profound emotional and life-changing impact.

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January 2012