

Revisiting 'Purpose and Design'

Earth Bible Principle #4

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Stefan Krauter, who responds to Vicky Balabanski's defence of third of the Six Ecological Principles of Earth Bible (EB) project,¹ that of voice, cautions that the process of biblical exegesis may be compromised by establishing 'external' hermeneutical principles, rather than allowing the criteria to emerge from the text itself. Krauter regards the principle 4, the principle of purpose, as particularly problematic 'because of its linguistic proximity to notions of "intelligent design"'.²

I write as a participant in the early stages of the EB project, including the formulation of the six principles. I do not question Krauter's legitimate concern to avoid any sort of ideological reading of the Bible, but I do want to address his concerns about principle 4, especially the admittedly problematic concepts of 'purpose' and 'design'.

To this end, I shall first say something about the EB project itself. Second, I shall consider the way the concepts of purpose and design are used by the Australian biologist and process theologian Charles Birch, whose book *On Purpose*³ informed a good deal of the early discussions of the principles. Third, I offer a retrospective of some of the early contributions to the EB project, in particular looking at how these terms are actually used by the EB authors. This

¹ VICKY BALABANSKI, "Revisiting the 'Voice of Earth' Earth Bible Principle #3," *JEAC* 5 (2023): 75–86. See also NORMAN C. HABEL, ed., *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24.

² STEFAN KRAUTER, "Sound—Voice—Communication: A Response to Vicky Balabanski," *JEAC* 5 (2023): 87–90, here 90.

³ CHARLES BIRCH, *On Purpose* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1990). Birch also provided the Preface for EB volume 2; see NORMAN C. HABEL and SHIRLEY WURST, eds., *The Earth Story in Genesis: The Earth Bible vol. 2*, EB 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 11–14.

retrospective will also consider the ongoing use, or not, of the ecojustice principles, especially in the Earth Bible Commentary Series, introduced by Norman Habel in his in 2011.⁴

1. The Earth Bible Project

The EB project is an ongoing research project begun in Adelaide in 1997 at the initiative of Old Testament scholar Norman Habel, and aimed at identifying implicit biases, either ecologically friendly or ecologically damaging, within the biblical text. The list of six ‘guiding ecojustice principles’ was formulated as a heuristic device for identifying values and presuppositions embedded in biblical texts. They are presented at the beginning of the first, exploratory volume published by the project, in the following terms:

1. The Principle of Intrinsic Worth: The universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
2. The Principle of Interconnection: Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
3. The Principle of Voice: Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
4. The Principle of Purpose: The universe, Earth and all its components, are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.
5. The Principle of Mutual Custodianship: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse Earth community.
6. The Principle of Resistance: Earth and its components not only suffer from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

The list was followed by two introductory chapters, one by Habel himself outlining the aims of the project, and a second the product of collaborative explorations of each of the principles in more detail.⁵

2. Birch’s discussion of purpose

Charles Birch’s *On Purpose* appeared in 1990, as one of the early forays, at least in Australia, into the domain of the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences. Its approach to theology is heavily reliant on the work of process philosophers and theologians. Birch describes his approach to biology at one point as ‘a thoroughgoing neo-Darwinian interpretation,’ and yet the ‘central symbol of ecological thinking’ for Birch is nothing less than purpose.⁶ Birch’s book provided a number of the key terms used in the EB discussions.

⁴ NORMAN C. HABEL, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1–11* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011).

⁵ HABEL, *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, 25–53.

⁶ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, xvii; 37; *passim*.

The notion of ‘intrinsic value’⁷ becomes a focus of principle 1, ‘intrinsic worth’. ‘Ecological worldview’ and ‘ecological model’⁸ become formative for principle 2, ‘interconnectedness.’ Birch’s notion of ‘persuasion’⁹ inspires the EB discussion of ‘voice’, which finds expression in principle 3. The EB principles 5 (mutual custodianship) and 6 (resistance) owe less to Birch’s pioneering work, but rather emerge from Norman Habel’s work with Australian Indigenous people, in the case of custodianship;¹⁰ and various participants’ interest in liberation theology, including Habel’s own work with Dalit people in Southern India, in the case of resistance. Principle 4 is heavily dependent on Birch’s work, whose subsequent book, *Confronting the Future*, is cited twice in the initial outlining of the Six Ecojustice Principles, once in reference to interconnection and once in reference to design. The reference to design (and indeed purpose, characterised as ‘direction’ here) reads:

... all the pieces of these ecosystems form a design and reflect a direction. The design is a magnificent green planet called Earth and the direction is to sustain life in all its diversity and beauty....¹¹

The key discussion of the nature of purpose and design builds on Birch’s earlier argument that non-human animals are like us in having feelings and purposes that are real causes in their lives. In terms of the EB principles, this lies behind the principle of intrinsic worth or value. For Birch, it involves a rejection of both the ‘chance alone’ causality and also the deist view that every detail of nature gives evidence of deterministic design. Both alternatives would give support, though in very different ways, ‘to the thesis that living organisms are machines.’¹² Birch devotes most of the ensuing argument to rejecting a deist-determinist view of nature and arguing for a neo-Darwinian view of evolution.¹³ In the course of this argument, and elsewhere, Birch clearly dissociates his position from both a vitalist or pantheist view of nature on the one hand,¹⁴ and the dualist notion of ‘intelligent design’ on the other.¹⁵ Birch’s critique of ‘intelligent design’ sees it as a continuation of early modern deism, with its mechanistic understanding of nature within the dualistic worldview that makes a sharp separation between mind and matter.¹⁶ Birch’s ecological model emphasizes relationships, in which ‘internal relations are constitutive of the entity.’¹⁷ These internal relations are connected to ‘the

⁷ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 18–19, 131–32.

⁸ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, xvi, 17, 31, 38, 43–47, 53, 95, *passim*.

⁹ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 41–43, 95.

¹⁰ NOLA ARCHIE ET AL., *Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards and Australian Aboriginal Theology* (Melbourne: HarperCollins, 1997); JASMINE COROWA ET AL., *The Rainbow Spirit in Creation: A Reading of Genesis 1* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000); ANNE PATTEL-GRAY ET AL., eds., *Decolonising the Biblical Narrative*, vols 1–3 (Adelaide: ATF, 2022–2023).

¹¹ The Earth Bible Team, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. by NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 38–53, here 45 and 48–49 respectively. This chapter is attributed to the EB Team, but was largely drafted by Habel himself.

¹² BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 33.

¹³ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 37.

¹⁴ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 78–81.

¹⁵ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 142–43.

¹⁶ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 142–43.

¹⁷ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 75.

idea of feelings'; they 'imply feelings of some sort, be it as memory in relation to the past or anticipation in relation to the future.'¹⁸ In applying such internal relations to reality, it goes without saying that Birch is, implicitly at least, pointing to a trinitarian understanding of God.¹⁹ His rejection of deism, and with it any notion of 'intelligent design' by an external agent, is indissolubly part and parcel of this direction in his thinking here.

Birch traces the development of Darwin's thinking from being a determinist with a deist theology to allowing room for chance, but never drawing any absolutist conclusions: 'Darwin put the emphasis on chance variations at the heart of the order of nature. But... that does not mean that design is replaced by chaos.'²⁰ The point Birch is making here is that the deist theological heterodoxy of the day (which passed for orthodoxy in much of the English-speaking world) was unprepared to accommodate the role of chance. 'God was identified with absolute law and non-chance. The dominant theology of Darwin's day was of no help to him in this respect.'²¹ The one exception among the theological thinkers with whom Darwin corresponded was Charles Kingsley, who wrote: 'now they have got rid of an interfering God—a master magician as I call it—they have to choose between the absolute empire of accident and a living, immanent, ever-working God.'²²

Chance is an essential component, but 'the meaning of chance in this context is quite specific (and) often misunderstood. It does not mean that mutation has not a cause'.²³ Rather, two chains of events intersect, viz. the random mutation of a molecule and the changing environment in which the molecule finds itself. A 'chance alone' theory simply replaces the omnipotent designer with an arbitrary 'inbuilt principle of nature'. In essence, it is every bit as deterministic. Birch's conclusion is to steer a path between pure determinism and unproductive chaos:

There are in fact only two ways of ordering. One is dictatorial. The other is persuasive. The something more than matter is mere matter I have already referred to as responsiveness or sentience.²⁴

The result is a consolidation of the principle of intrinsic worth. It is not unlike, though expressed very differently, the 'seething landscape' of Indigenous Australian ontology.²⁵

¹⁸ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 76.

¹⁹ In his preface to EB volume 2, Birch writes: 'Western thought focuses on external relationships. A relationship is external when it does not affect the nature of the things involved.' See CHARLES BIRCH, "Preface," in *Earth Story in Genesis: The Earth Bible vol. 2*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL and SHIRLYEY WURST, EB 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 14. Jürgen Moltmann has demonstrated that a trinitarian theology has to involve the reality of God's feelings, and vice versa, whereby God is indeed affected by God's relationships with creatures. See JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1981).

²⁰ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 34–35.

²¹ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 40.

²² Charles Kingsley, cited by Birch, *On Purpose*, 41 (cited from: CHARLES RAVEN, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology: Gifford Lectures part 1* [Cambridge, 1953], 177).

²³ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 36.

²⁴ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 41.

²⁵ KIM MAHOOD, "The seething landscape," in *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, ed. MARGO NEALE (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2017), 32–35.

The individual entities that constitute matter are subjects, be they protons or people. They are sentient to the possibilities of their future, within the limitations imposed by their past. What they respond to ... are the persuasive possibilities relevant to their future. Creation is not by fiat but by persuasion.²⁶

Further, quoting Hartshorne, Birch argues that we have misunderstood teleology ‘only because creativity had not been grasped in its proper universality, as the principle of existence itself’.²⁷ Self-organisation was, at the time of Birch’s writing, coming to be seen as a principle embedded in nature. For Birch, ‘There is no reason to draw a line anywhere and say that below that line choice no longer operates at all in any sense.... The principle in the ecological model is that there is a continuum all down the line.’²⁸

None of this is remarkable thirty-five years after *On Purpose*, but in the early nineties of the last century it was new information for many theologians and biblical scholars. Birch, and other researchers in the natural sciences like him, found common ground with a new wave of ecological theologies. It is perhaps not so surprising that principle 4, on purpose and design in nature, should emerge from this environment, but with no intention of suggesting some form of deist or determinist ‘intelligent design’ by Kingsley’s ‘master magician’. It is important to note, in all this, that Birch went to great lengths to distinguish his position from the advocates of ‘intelligent design’.²⁹

3. Use of the principle of purpose by Earth Bible authors

In the interests of conciseness, this survey will restrict itself largely to the mentions of the principle of purpose in EB volume 1. These are varied, and in some cases implicit rather than explicit.

Heather Eaton acknowledges, somewhat cryptically, that ‘this principle functions to provide a fundamental orientation to the whole’, that is, it maintains an openness to an emergent process of human development. Eaton continues, however, that ‘the great danger of this principle is its potential to function as a hegemonic metanarrative, and it is difficult, verging on impossible, to combine it with postmodernism.’³⁰ Eaton defines ‘postmodern’ somewhat differently here from Birch, seeing it as involving a certain ‘incredulity towards metanarratives.’³¹ But her criticism is also one that could be made of any or all of the principles. Does not a list of heuristic principles itself run the risk of becoming a sort of metanarrative? Eaton’s criticism here anticipates Krauter’s concern that ‘it seems problematic to formulate the principles of theological hermeneutics from an external standpoint.’

²⁶ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 42. Habel would, of course, argue that the biblical *fiat* is in fact something even less directive than persuasion: it is allowing something to come into being. See NORMAN C. HABEL, “Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1,” in *The Earth Story in Genesis: The Earth Bible vol. 2*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL AND SHIRLEY WURST, EB 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 34–48.

²⁷ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 42.

²⁸ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 43.

²⁹ Birch is very insistent on this, in other places as well, eg. BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 60.

³⁰ HEATHER EATON, “Ecofeminist Contributions to an Ecojustice Hermeneutics,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 54–71, here 67–68.

³¹ EATON, “Ecofeminist Contributions,” 59, fn. 5.

Another contributor to EB volume 1 who mentions the principle of purpose explicitly is Dianne Bergant. In her reading of the Wisdom of Solomon, Bergant suggests:

we could maintain, according to the principle of purpose, that ‘the universe, the earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design’. From this perspective, we can see that the universe, the earth and all its components constitute an ecosystem, a system of diverse yet interrelated components that function synergistically—that is, interdependently.³²

This understanding is much closer to what we have seen in Birch. Bergant continues that ‘this ecojustice principle of purpose is closely aligned with the principle of interconnectedness’, and ‘not only are these two principles aligned, but it is difficult to separate them and to decide which one is primary ...’³³ Purpose is not seen as the threat of an imposed metanarrative, but as an emergent extension of Birch’s first axiom, that ‘nature is organic and ecological.’³⁴

The principle of purpose is more prominent in those chapters of EB volume 1 that explore what Birch calls ‘the efficacy of the future in the present’.³⁵ Michael Trainor writes about the vision of a new society and a new way of living, in the Lukan infancy narratives, and this is both a matter of purpose and, to some extent, an ecological *telos*. This ecological purpose is not unambiguous: in Luke, ‘the land is a means to an end’,³⁶ but beyond that there is a sense for Trainor that

The earth awaits this birth (sc. of Jesus) so the primordial vision of creation presented in Genesis can be realized. Only then can the rest of creation—including human beings in their interrelationships—rejoice. The new vision or attitude to the earth comes from what God bestows on the earth ...³⁷

The groaning of the earth as it awaits this realisation is a major theme of Romans 8, and especially the passages examined by Brendan Byrne. Human beings and humanity have a ‘common fate’ in a number of the biblical writings, ‘an interconnectedness binding all together—for good and for ill’.³⁸ Byrne calls this a ‘principle of a common fate’, and it is on this principle that

Paul envisages ‘creation’ awaiting with ‘eager longing the revelation of the sons and daughters of God’ (Rom. 8.19). That is, creation awaits the arrival of human beings at the fullness of the graced humanity intended for them by God.³⁹

³² DIANNE BERGANT, “The Wisdom of Solomon,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 138–50, here 147.

³³ BERGANT, “Wisdom,” 147–48.

³⁴ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 128.

³⁵ BIRCH, *On Purpose*, 15. This occurs in a sub-section of Birch’s book on ‘the ambiguity of purpose’.

³⁶ MICHAEL TRAINOR, “‘And on Earth, Peace...’ (Luke 2.14): Luke’s Perspectives on the Earth,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 174–92, here 190.

³⁷ TRAINOR, “And on Earth, Peace...,” 191.

³⁸ BRENDAN BYRNE, “Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8. 18–22,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 193–203, here 195. The editors of EB volume 2 consider that of the contributors to volume 1, Byrne and my own chapter make the most explicit use of the principle of purpose. See HABEL and WURST, *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 30–31.

³⁹ BYRNE, “Creation Groaning,” 197.

The great value of this small passage is that it draws concern for the non-human created world into Paul's grand conception of the Creator's gracious renewal of relations with humankind in Christ.⁴⁰

Indeed, this is how the principle of purpose works, even though it may at times be 'in some tension with the principle of interconnectedness'.⁴¹ It points to future possibilities that can become real causes in our lives. And this in turn, as Paul Trebilco points out, can become a cause for thanksgiving: 'The appropriate response to what God has created is not abstention, but reception.'⁴² Trebilco's statement is dangerous: it could, for example, be used to justify the colonial occupation ('reception') of the Australian landmass. Trebilco does recognise this risk towards the end of his chapter:

The Earth community does not consist of disposable matter; rather it is holy and sacred by virtue of being created and sanctified by God....

To put it another way, without the qualification 'provided it is received with thanksgiving', the view that 'everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected' could lead to rampant exploitation.⁴³

But that is exactly the problem here: in many colonial situations, God the creator has been thanked effusively, but the exploitation of the earth has progressed apace. Purpose carries, as Birch has pointed out, its own ambiguities as well as its own joys.

The principle of purpose is about teleology, about what God has intended for Earth and life, human and non-human, upon it. This is the 'grand conception of the Creator's gracious renewal.' My argument is that this principle, as formulated by the EB team, has to be understood in the light of Charles Birch's book *On Purpose*. As an ecojustice principle, it is itself to be treated with suspicion, and this is possibly why so many of the EB volume 1 authors chose to bypass it, and base their readings on the more solid grounds of intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and custodianship. The same can be said of the EB volume 2 authors, but the principle of purpose comes into its own in EB volume 3, in the discussion of the wisdom literature. Van Heerden's chapter draws a contrast between purpose and the counter-example of the essentially absurdist perspective he sees in the author of Ecclesiastes.⁴⁴ Marie Turner's chapter proposes an ecofeminist interpretation, with the principle of purpose front and centre of her discussion.⁴⁵ Teleology has its place in these discussions. The culture of postmodernity may well be characterised by an incredulity towards metanarratives, but the

⁴⁰ BYRNE, "Creation Groaning," 200.

⁴¹ BYRNE, "Creation Groaning," 201.

⁴² PAUL TREBILCO, "The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1–5)," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth: The Earth Bible vol. 1*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL, EB 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 209–10, here 210.

⁴³ TREBILCO, "Goodness and Holiness," 219.

⁴⁴ WILLIE VAN HEERDEN, "Ecclesiastes 3.16–22: An Ecojustice Reading, with parallels from African Wisdom," in *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions: The Earth Bible vol. 3*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL AND SHIRLEY WURST, EB 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 155–67.

⁴⁵ MARIE TURNER, "God's Design: The Death of Creation? An Ecojustice Reading of Romans 8: 18–30 in the Light of Wisdom 1–2," in *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions: The Earth Bible vol. 3*, ed. NORMAN C. HABEL AND SHIRLEY WURST, EB 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 168–78. See also, in this volume the chapters by SHIRLEY WURST, "Wisdom Woman's Way: Ekokinship," 48–64; NORMAN C. HABEL, "Earth First: Inverse Cosmology in Job," 65–77; DALE PATRICK, "Divine Creative Power and the Decentering of Creation: The Subtext of the Lord's Addresses to Job," 103–15.

EB project itself presupposes the biblical metanarrative, and it is not without precedent for this particular metanarrative to be met with incredulity. In the end it may be such a metanarrative that is needed to prevent the interconnected whole from splintering into some postmodern hubbub of disparate voices. The voice of Earth may just embody a deep sense of underlying purpose.

Finally, something must be said about this principle of purpose, and the principles generally, in the ongoing Earth Bible Commentary Series.⁴⁶ In the first volume of this series, after a reiteration of the six principles, Habel introduces what amounts to a modified approach:

Our approach in this new Earth Bible Commentary series attempts to move beyond a focus on ecological themes to a process of listening to, and identifying with, Earth as a presence or voice in the text. Our task is to take up the cause of Earth and the non-human members of the Earth community by sensing their presence in the text--whether their presence is suppressed, oppressed or celebrated. We seek to move beyond identifying ecological themes in creation theology to identifying with Earth in its ecojustice struggles.⁴⁷

Habel then moves on to explain the reasons for this shift in attention: ‘the various critiques of the Earth Bible principles, dialogue within the Earth Bible team and an analysis of so-called second level hermeneutical approaches.’ The task of this new approach, which actually contains some elements of the old, for example the hermeneutical dialectic of suspicion and retrieval, is ‘not what a given text may say *about* creation, *about* nature, or *about* Earth. In this context, Earth is not a *topos* or theme for analysis.’ Rather, ‘an ecological hermeneutic demands a radical change of posture both in relation to Earth as a subject in the text and also our relation to Earth as readers.’⁴⁸ In this discussion, Habel allows the ecojustice principles to be in effect left behind as explicit heuristic devices, although they continue to inform the ongoing commentary series. Vicky Balabanski, one of the series editors, makes this clear:

We continue to ask people to interact with the principles in the commentaries, though this tends to be in the introduction rather than explicitly throughout the body of the commentaries ... The principles continue to point to the distinctive contribution that the Earth Bible approach seeks to achieve, namely to read in solidarity with Earth. The principles sharpen our understanding of what that means. ... (They) continue to receive fresh scholarly attention.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ These include, to date: HABEL, *The Birth*; MICHAEL TRAINOR, *About Earth's Child: an Ecological Listening to the Gospel of Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012); RAYMOND PERSON, *Deuteronomy and Environmental Amnesia* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014); ANTHONY REES, *Voices of the Wilderness: an Ecological Reading of the Book of Numbers* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015); ELAINE WAINWRIGHT, *Habitat, Human and Holy: an Eco-rhetorical Reading of the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2016); SIGVE TONSTAD, *The Letter to the Romans; Paul among the Ecologists* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2016); MARGARET DALY-DENTON, *John: an Earth Bible Commentary: Supposing Him to be the Gardener* (London: T&T Clark, 2017); MARIE TURNER, *Ecclesiastes: an Earth Bible Commentary: Qoheleth's Eternal Earth* (London: T&T Clark, 2017); ARTHUR WALKER-JONES, *Psalms: Book 2: an Earth Bible Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2019); VICKY BALABANSKI, *Colossians: an Eco-stoic Reading* (London: T&T Clark, 2020); JIONE HAVEA: *Jonah: an Earth Bible Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2020); JEFFREY LAMP, *Hebrews: an Earth Bible Commentary: a City that Cannot be Shaken* (London: T&T Clark, 2020); ALICE SINNOT, *Ruth: an Earth Bible Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2020); MICHAEL TRAINOR, *About Earth's Children: an Ecological Listening to the Acts of the Apostles* (London: T&T Clark, 2020); NICHOLAS WERSE, *Zephaniah: An Earth Bible Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2024).

⁴⁷ HABEL, *The Birth*, 2.

⁴⁸ HABEL, *The Birth*, 3.

⁴⁹ VICKY BALABANSKI, personal email, 10 Sept. 2024, cited with permission.

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