

THE NATURE OF THINGS

REDISCOVERING THE SPIRITUAL IN GOD'S CREATION

Edited by Graham Buxton & Norman Habel

Foreword by David Rhoads

In 2015 a conference on “Rediscovering the Spiritual in God’s Creation” was held at the Serafino winery complex in the McLaren Vale region of South Australia. The aim of the conference was not to seek consensus but to survey the landscape with a view to intentional responsible action in caring for God’s creation. Delegates were challenged to recognize their own worldviews and to widen their horizons to encompass the enormity of the transcendence and immanence of God’s presence in all creation. A group of leading international scholars and experts in the fields of science, ecology, theology, and ethics participated in a multidisciplinary conversation on the spiritual in creation, with the aim of discovering fresh horizons with regard to creation care, liturgy, justice, and discipleship within the Christian community. The chapters in this volume reflect the diversity of perspectives summarized in *The Serafino Declaration*, which was crafted towards the end of the conference. This declaration (which opens the volume) outlines a range of views relating to the presence of the spiritual in creation, views that are both traditional and radical. This volume highlights the current concern over ecological destruction and finds sources of inspiration in the deepest roots of our traditions and forms of spirituality to sustain efforts towards custodianship of the land and care for God’s creation.



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“The theological doctrine of the presence of God *within* creation has traditionally been an oft-ignored theme throughout church history, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps, in some critical way, this has contributed to the church’s hostile posture toward the ecological crisis. But a change is afoot. To aid in reversing this, *The Nature of Things* exercises a sensitive and attentive eye in retrieving this lost doctrinal dimension of the church’s worship. Kudos to Buxton and Habel for directing such a needed, and refreshingly diverse, orchestra.”

—A.J. SWOBODA, Pastor; Professor, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary; Author of *The Dusty Ones* and *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*; Executive Director, Seminary Stewardship Alliance

“This book is an invaluable source for rethinking Christian theology and spirituality in relation to the natural world and evolution itself. It is a superb collection of essays by leading Christian theologians, Biblical scholars, and ethicists. Clearly one of the most important books on this subject yet to be published.

—MARY EVELYN TUCKER, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Graham Buxton is a Senior Research Fellow at the Graeme Clark Research Institute at Tabor College of Higher Education in Adelaide, South Australia, and currently serves as a Professor of Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. His most recent books are *An Uncertain Certainty* (Cascade, 2014) and a revised edition of *Dancing in the Dark* (Cascade, 2016).

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