

white women, Blacks, Pacific Islanders, Asians, and Indigenous people responded to and resisted settler colonial laws, *Leveraging an Empire* does exactly what it says it will do with vigor and care.

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*The Nature of the Religious Right: The Struggle Between Conservative Evangelicals and the Environmental Movement.* By Neall W. Pogue. (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2022. xi + 237 pp).

“WHAT ARE WE DOING TO GOD’S EARTH?” questioned a leading American evangelical periodical in May 1970 (p. 23). As historian Neall W. Pogue recounts in *The Nature of the Christian Right*, in the aftermath of the first official Earth Day observance the spring of that year, “mainstream” American evangelical leaders in the United States mirrored the nation’s growing concern over widespread environmental degradation. In Pogue’s telling, these prominent leaders embraced in response neither a human-centered, utilitarian approach of dominion over nature nor an environmental apathy rooted in premillennial premonitions of the earth’s fiery demise. Instead, starting in the 1970s, they unexpectedly championed a “philosophy” of “Christian environmental stewardship” before abruptly abandoning it in the early 1990s (pp. 2, 174).

Pogue’s account argues “Christian environmental stewardship” first found fertile expression in the thought of American evangelical Francis Schaeffer. Schaeffer’s landmark book *Pollution and the Death of Man* tilled the soil for a harvest of “eco-friendly philosophies” within the “conservative evangelical mainstream” (p. 2). The itinerant evangelist argued evangelicals had a Scripturally rooted responsibility to care for God’s creation. Humans, he posited, were but one part of a broader ecological “natural order” that they needed to steward. On this point, Schaeffer’s environmental philosophy proved far more ambitious than merely caring for creation. Preserving what was “natural” also included advancing other well-documented evangelical causes, such as counteracting the “artificial” sexual revolution (pp. 43–45).

While it gained mainstream appeal, Schaeffer’s “stewardship philosophy” experienced a fall from grace in the early 1990s. At that point, Pogue maintains, evangelical leaders recoiled in reaction to the consistent critiques of aggressive “secular” environmentalists, who had long argued that Christianity “perpetuated the ecological crisis” (p. 6). In response, evangelical leaders

labeled environmentalists as “earth-worshipping extremists” and agents of a “one-world state” (pp. 139, 150). For these mainstream personalities, association with environmentalism now carried great political and religious risk and necessitated their disavowal of Schaeffer’s thought.

In unearthing the rise and fall of this strain of evangelical environmentalism, Pogue’s study marks a welcome foil to the standard historiography on the Religious Right. And yet, the book’s overall focus on elite figures and institutions raises two pressing questions: first, to what extent did everyday evangelicals fully embrace such ecological commitments? And second, where should historians properly locate the center of American evangelicalism?

Recently, several historians of modern American evangelicalism have challenged long-accepted historical markers of evangelical identity, such as the Bebbington quadrilateral (p. 9), arguing that such abstractions captured the doctrinal concerns of white evangelicalism’s vanguard at the expense of the movement’s populist core. Moreover, such a framework obscured the militant masculinity, political dominance, white supremacy, skepticism toward science, and visions of Armageddon at the center of white evangelicalism. Through focusing primarily on “mainstream” elites, Pogue has outlined an evangelicalism that arguably proved far gentler and kinder on ecological issues than what may have existed within the core of the movement. This historical recovery, while significant and needed, overlooks a much more heated, complex, and deep-seated internal evangelical struggle over ecology and identity. When weighing Christian stewardship’s downfall, it also potentially attributes too much causation to the external critiques of secular environmentalists, as opposed to the internal, core instincts of evangelicals themselves. Finally, greater inclusion of Black and female evangelical voices could have helped the book uncover much more prophetic and visionary evangelical ecologies, many of which endure to this day. These concerns aside, Pogue’s work has offered a firm foundation to further tease out the contested reality of American evangelical environmentalism.

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