

Mark Porter. *For the Warming of the Earth: Music, Faith, and Ecological Crisis*. SCM Press, 2024. 210 pages. \$52.00.

In *For the Warming of the Earth*, Mark Porter takes up a question that churches, musicians, and theological educators can no longer afford to treat as marginal: what might Christian musical practice sound like in a time of ecological crisis? Drawing on more than forty interviews with activists, songwriters, Christian leaders, and musicians, Porter examines emerging forms of music-making that respond to climate change through worship, protest, lament, education, and attention to the more-than-human world. The result is a timely and thoughtful study that helps name a growing field of practice that many readers will know only in fragments.

The book is organized around five clusters of musical innovation: worship and climate albums, activism and acts of protest, communication and song festivals, grief and ecological requiems, and sound and natural environments. This structure makes clear that Porter is not offering a narrow manual on “creation care worship.” He is instead mapping a wider landscape of Christian musical responses to ecological crisis. That broad scope is one of the book’s chief strengths. Porter shows that the relationship between music, faith, and ecology is not exhausted by songs that celebrate the beauty of creation, but also includes practices of grief, public witness, coalition-building, and ecological listening.

Porter’s method is primarily ethnographic and descriptive, and that is to the book’s benefit. Rather than forcing the diverse examples into a single ideal model, he attends carefully to the different theological, musical, and practical logics at work in each setting. Public reception of the book has rightly emphasized this feature. Porter seems less interested in finding one correct solution than in helping readers perceive a range of contextually appropriate responses. In that sense, the book offers a useful taxonomy of a neglected field and gives scholars and practitioners better language for discussing how music might mediate relationships among faith, activism, grief, place, and ecological responsibility.

This makes the book especially valuable for readers in liturgical theology, practical theology, religion and ecology, church music, and hymnology. It would also serve graduate students and clergy who are trying to think more carefully about how worship relates to climate crisis without reducing that question either to generic activism or to vague aesthetic appreciation of nature. Porter helps illuminate a genuine void in contemporary discussions of worship music. In many church contexts, ecological concern remains underdeveloped liturgically and musically, even when it is affirmed morally. Porter’s study usefully presses against that gap.

At the same time, the book’s breadth may also create some of its limitations. A project built around diverse “snapshots” of musical innovation can leave readers wanting a thicker synthesis of how these practices might move from creative or specialist settings into the ordinary life of congregations. As a reader formed by North American evangelical worship culture, I found myself asking how Porter’s examples might translate into larger churches shaped by familiar contemporary worship idioms, scale, and programmatic habits. That question does not diminish the value of the book’s descriptive work. It does, however, point to a significant challenge of reception. The communities most in need of ecological liturgical imagination may also be the ones least prepared to receive these experiments. Public reviewers have noted a similar tension between Porter’s welcome openness and the reader’s desire for stronger synthesis.

Even so, Porter achieves something important. He broadens the theological imagination around what faithful music-making might entail in a warming world. He shows that Christian responses to ecological crisis may take the form not only of praise but also lament, protest, requiem, and renewed attentiveness to creaturely sound. For homileticians and worship leaders alike, that insight matters. Preaching and worship both depend on habits of perception, and Porter's book helps readers notice dimensions of creation, crisis, and hope that churches have too often left musically unaddressed. *For the Warming of the Earth* is a significant contribution to an emerging conversation, and it deserves a wide hearing among scholars and religious leaders willing to ask what faithful worship might sound like on a damaged yet beloved earth.

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