

Coral - A Pessimist in Paradise by Steve Jones. Little, Brown 2007

As he has demonstrated in previous books such as *Almost Like a Whale*, Steve Jones has the capacity to write about scientific matters in a manner that not only engages the interest of a non-scientific reader but informs the ignorant in a stimulating and direct way that never patronises.

In *Coral - A Pessimist in Paradise*, Steve Jones, tells the story of coral itself, as a biological organism, as a currency, and as a barometer for what is happening in a rapidly warming world. He ranges widely over his subject, taking the reader on a tour of some of the world's most beautiful oceans and places.

There are now many books available on the issues of climate change and global warming; but Jones' *Envoi* in *Coral* is a chapter that says everything that needs to be said and does so in a deliberate, detailed and convincing way that is highly informative and deeply depressing.

It is hard not to conclude, on completing *Coral*, that the damage human beings have done to the planet has placed global recovery already beyond reach; and hope in *Coral* is very hard to find.

Steve Jones eloquently tells the story of *Coral* and leaves the reader awed by its strange combination of intricacy and simplicity, durability and fragility; he also makes it clear beyond doubt that human vandalism of this precious resource is but a paradigm for our despoliation of planet earth as a whole.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh