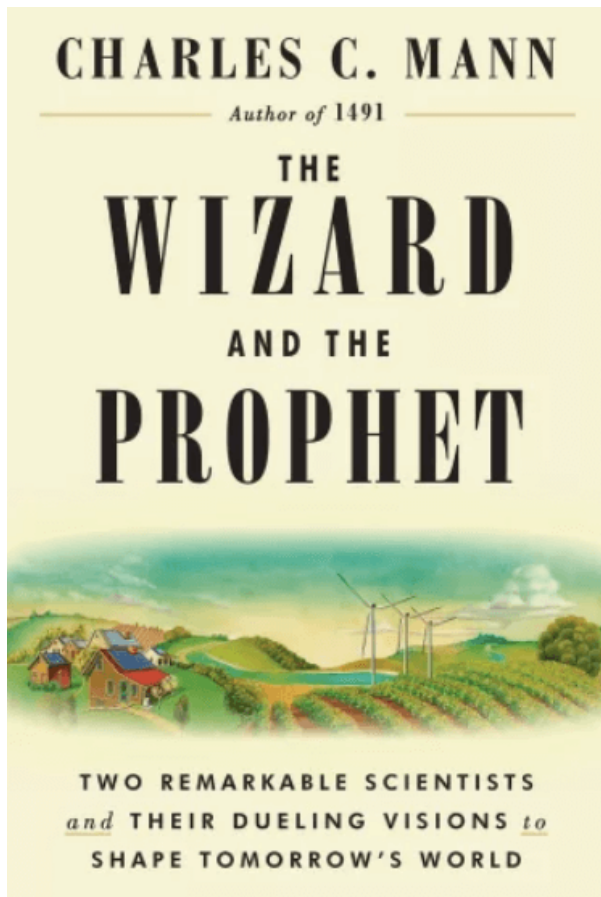


## The Wizard and the Prophet: Norman Borlaug vs William Vogt on science, environmentalism and human progress

Feeding the ever-growing number of people on the planet is hard enough, without having to adapt to a rapidly changing climate at the same time. The question is, can humans overcome the laws of biology?



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In his latest book, [\*The Wizard and the Prophet: Two Remarkable Scientists and Their Dueling Visions to Shape Tomorrow's World\*](#), science writer Charles C. Mann introduces two men who believed that the answer was yes....

...

**What issues do you feel best capture the opposing philosophies of wizards and prophets?**

One is the fight over GMOs—genetically modified organisms—especially for agriculture. Norman Borlaug, in the last years of his life, was an enthusiastic endorser of GMOs as something that would create hyper-productive plants that would allow us to produce enormous amounts of food on relatively little land, and

would fit neatly into the kind of industrial agriculture where you have giant swaths of countryside covered with a single crop. The prophets, or environmentalists, hate this because they see it as propping up a system that is, by its very nature, destructive. ... Although there's been a lot of fighting—which is, in my opinion, not very useful—about whether they're safe or not, the sort of fundamental idea about whether this is a system we should be continuing on with or radically reforming, I think, is at the heart of it.

**Read full, original post:** [Two competing accounts of how to save the world](#)