

Editorial

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In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Gen. 1:1)

Genesis 1, the hymn of creation that sets in motion the entire biblical story, may be one of the most neglected biblical texts in contemporary Christianity. Imagine that you have a close friend who is a gifted artist. This friend creates a painting that is a masterpiece in terms of its enormous variety of images, its vivid splashes of colour, its mind-boggling size, and the intricate inter-connectedness of its infinite number of features. The artist displays the stunning masterpiece publicly, so that all may be blessed by its beauty. But vandals begin to deface the canvas, using knives to hack, slash, and even obliterate many of the animals and plants so lovingly crafted by your friend. The vandals splash heavy black paint across the canvas, transforming magnificent landscapes into shadows of themselves. Sadly, people who claim to be close friends of the artist seem to be among the vandals.

What is the appropriate response to a magnificent work of art, especially one created by a friend? Is it not respect, protective care, reverence, and praise for both the artwork and its creator? Christians have reason to be absolutely passionate about creation care. We worship and claim to be best friends with the master artist who has created this amazing world in which we are privileged to live. We literally live within God's great work of art. Who should be more conscious and protective of its beauty than a people whose scripture begins with the story of the artist at work creating the earth, its marvellous plants and animals, and then its crown jewel—humankind?

Many of the creation myths told by ancient Israel's neighbours depicted the world as the accidental by-product of a cosmic struggle among the gods. When one particularly powerful deity

defeated his archenemy and killed her, as an afterthought he created the world out of her dead body. Genesis 1 tells a profoundly different story. God speaks the world into being in an orderly and purposeful manner, pausing along the way to observe and evaluate his work and declare, "It was good." At the end of six days, when creation is complete, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (1:31).

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One could make a case that Genesis 1 is the most foundational text of the Bible. Some may claim that God's salvation is more foundational than God's creation. But without creation, there is nothing to save. As Creator, God cares so deeply about creation that when sin enters the picture and begins its destructive work, God initiates the grand

project of salvation. God works to save both humanity, which has become alienated from its maker, and creation itself, which "has been groaning in labour pains until now" (Rom. 8:22).

This issue of *Vision* represents a summons to embrace Genesis 1 and its implications. The bookends of this issue, the opening sermon by Henry Janzen and the closing reflections on a spirituality of creation care by Susan Classen, invite attentiveness to the majesty and mystery of creation, suggesting that such attentiveness will lead to greater amazement and delight, which in turn will generate praise and deeper gratitude for God's infinitely precious gift of creation. Jürgen Schönwetter makes similar points by describing how his love of plants, of gardening, and of eating the fruits of the soil inspire praise of the Creator and awareness of human dependence on the grace of God. Implicit in these pieces and others is the insight that creation care best begins not with guilt at how humankind is destroying creation (although such guilt may have its place), but with delight, amazement, reverence, gratitude, and praise, all inspired by attentiveness to the wondrous nature of God's handiwork.

Steven Bouma-Prediger's article surveys the biblical story from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, in order to demonstrate how determined God is to preserve and redeem the natural world so carefully created in Genesis 1. Ultimately salvation is not about

Christians being whisked out of this broken and sinful world to heaven but about God healing and renewing this broken and sinful world. Wilma Bailey's reflections on Genesis 1 focus on the role humans are called to play in relation to the other elements of God's creation.

Immediately following the Genesis creation story stands the account of human rebellion in the garden and the unleashing of sin into a good creation. In the Bible, human sin and the welfare of creation are intimately linked, as illustrated by the flood story and the prophets' insistence that human sin sets in motion a chain of events that includes devastation of the natural order. Joanne Moyer's insightful article highlights some of the contemporary ways human sin manifests itself in Western attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, and practices that facilitate the desecration of God's creation. The reflections of Aboriginal pastor Adrian Jacobs remind us that other cultures have understandings of creation that differ markedly from those typical of the West, and that the Western worldview is not necessarily a true reflection of God's reality.

If God is at work to redeem creation, then surely the people of God ought to live in ways that participate in God's redemptive work. Ray Vander Zaag analyzes the relationship between peace-building and creation care. He concludes that engaging in a broad spectrum of justice- and peace-building efforts (pursuing the biblical vision of *shalom*) is one of the most significant forms of creation care, because the natural world is often a major casualty when there is conflict, injustice, and unequal appropriation of resources. Cathleen Hockman-Wert reminds us that food is one of God's most wonderful gifts. Foods come with histories or stories that we become a part of as we eat those foods. Thus, eating provides an opportunity to participate in the story of creation's destruction, or to participate in the story of God's redeeming of creation.

In one way or another, all the articles in the issue remind us that

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