

From Creation to New Creation: Missions and the Natural World

By Walter McConnell

The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2010, was designed to challenge the church in its worldwide witness to Jesus Christ. The discussions that began before and continued throughout the congress led to the publication of a document known as *The Cape Town Commitment* which brings together biblical teaching on the nature of the good news about Jesus and a call for churches, mission agencies, theological schools, and individual Christians to live out the primary truths of the gospel. While the whole document should be required reading for missionaries, pastors, and theologians, the focus of this issue of *Mission Round Table* brings the seventh article of the Cape Town Confession of Faith into focus: “We Love God’s World.” This section begins with a summary statement.

We share God’s passion for his world, loving all that God has made, rejoicing in God’s providence and justice throughout his creation, proclaiming the good news to all creation and all nations, and longing for the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.¹

Most Christians will agree that much of this fits well into their understanding of Scripture. Even so, we should ask ourselves whether it is true and whether it is true for us. Do we share God’s passion for his world? Do we love all that he has made? Do we proclaim the good news to all creation? To all nations? Do we long for the earth to be filled with the knowledge of God’s glory? Does this sum up our practice or did the committee get it wrong? Perhaps the biggest problem many will have with the statement is its desire that we proclaim “the good news to all creation”. Can we do this? Should we do this? Just how should we relate to the world in which we live?

Our confusion over this issue is not surprising. Christians have always been somewhat ambivalent in their relationship to the environment. In part, this is because the world can be a scary place where storms and waves and earthquakes and droughts make life precarious. But it is also a beautiful place where mountains and oceans and forests and plains inspire awe and provide us with food, minerals, and other useful materials. Should we think of the world as a frightening or a welcoming place? Should we regard the plants, animals, and minerals as things to be exploited for our own ends or as created things to be preserved? And if the latter, to what extent and in what way should we preserve them?

To answer these questions we need a good biblical theology of creation that explains how humans should relate to the rest of the world. This is particularly true as we live in an age when humans have the power to control and destroy their environment to an extent previously unknown. It is also true because Christian thought is regularly blamed for the modern ecological crisis.² Christians have responded to the barrage of charges about their culpability for environmental problems in at least four ways.³ The first is to deny the seriousness of the world’s condition in the belief

that humans should use the world freely because God created it for their use. The second “accepts the reality of environmental problems, but sees them as a grim but ultimately hopeful sign that the last days ... are almost upon us.” A third response “accepts both the reality of environmental problems and the accuracy of the environmentalist characterization of Christian beliefs” and argues that any ideas they feel stem from the biblical tradition and harm the environment—even those that are central to the faith—should be purged from Christian tradition. The fourth recognizes that the Bible, followed by a “broad stream of orthodox Christian” thinkers, considers the world to have value in and of itself.⁴

Most Christians will be drawn to one of these four responses to modern ecological problems. Some of us believe that creation care, stewardship of creation, or earthkeeping—whatever we choose to call it—is central to God’s mission and desire that everyone becomes as committed to it as we are. Some, while recognizing that Christians should care for creation, see it lying somewhere on the periphery of church life where it will be pursued by an interested and gifted few. Others feel ecological matters are of minor significance, either because of their eschatological convictions or because they believe that missions is only concerned with evangelism and church planting.

In the light of these divergent views, it is essential that we reexamine the Bible’s teaching on the issue. This is true even though it never explicitly mentions ecology or the environmental crisis. But while the biblical writers did not address these issues directly, they had plenty to say about the relationships God designed into the created order and how humans should relate to everything else. From its initial sentences about what happened “in the beginning” to its final thoughts on the nature of the new creation, the Bible consistently places humanity in the context of everything that God made. Its instruction about our place in creation should guide our thoughts as we work through this issue.

“IN THE BEGINNING”

In the musical “The Sound of Music”, Maria begins to teach the von Trapp children to sing by suggesting, “Let’s start at the very beginning ...” These are wise words for a music tutor and also provide “a very good place to start” for everyone who wants to learn what the Bible teaches about the relationship between humans and the rest of creation. But even though our major focus will be the human–creation connection, it is essential that we begin with God, since he is the first subject of Scripture and he sets the context within which our other relationships should be evaluated.

The words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” were not written to promote a scientific or philosophical argument but as a response to the theological, social, and psychological concerns of the tribes of Israel as they progressed from Egypt to Canaan. The wilderness experience gave the Israelites much time to ponder their place in the world. They



wondered, “How do we, as the people of Yahweh, fit into this world where many gods are worshipped? How does Yahweh fit into the pantheon of gods? Should we worship Yahweh and other gods or Yahweh alone?” By addressing these questions, the Genesis creation accounts informed the Israelites who Yahweh was, how they should relate to him, and how they should relate to the world around them.

God the Creator

A number of conclusions can be drawn from Genesis 1–3 about how people should relate to God and the rest of creation. We will consider what it says about how humans should relate to God before considering their relationship to the world. First, the proclamation that Yahweh is the sole Creator refutes the polytheism of nearby cultures.⁵ In stark contrast to the gods described in other ancient creation accounts, Yahweh needed no help to create the world. He is powerful rather than impotent, just rather than capricious, concerned for the lot of humanity rather than attempting to use them for his own benefits.⁶ When Israel wanted to know Yahweh’s position among the gods, Genesis informed them that he was not a tribal deity or the God of the wilderness or one god among many. Rather, he was the one true God, the creator of all things, the only one who deserved to be worshipped. They also discovered that many of the “gods” worshipped by others were actually things created by God. Since God made the light and separated it from darkness, separated the heavens from the earth, and made the luminaries to light the day and night, people are freed from worshipping the heavens or the bodies it contains. Since God separated the water in the seas from dry land, caused seed yielding plants to grow, and created the sea creatures, birds, land animals, and people, no one needs to fear or worship any of them. Since the things worshipped as gods are created by God, all polytheistic ideologies and practices are negated. The God of creation can free his people from Egypt and established his covenant with them and can free all people from serving other gods—whether they are connected to the natural world, are made of wood, metal or stone, or are found in the current fascination many have with sex, success, and security.

Second, though not part of its original intent, Genesis’s picture of God as the transcendent Lord of creation, counters the materialistic and mechanistic worldviews that are so common today. The universe did not simply come into being or evolve without a goal but was made for God’s purposes. And since the material was created by God it has value. This demands that we understand God’s purpose for it and rejects the utilitarian idea that the material world exists to be used according to our wishes. Space prevents us from developing this idea further.

Third, the transcendence of God is united with his immanence.⁷ While the God of the Bible is wholly distinct from everything else, he is not an absent watchmaker who got everything started and then left it to its own devices. His intimate presence in creation demonstrates his loving care. Not only does the Spirit of God hover over the waters, God repeatedly speaks things into existence and then names, blesses, and evaluates what he has made. As Blocher says, “Creation by the word is not only a creation without tools or effort, it is a creation by which God shows his ‘heart’, demonstrates his intelligence and inaugurates the communication of himself which he will make by speaking to mankind.”⁸ His repeated proclamation that everything was “good” confirms his personal interest in and enjoyment of what

was made. All creation matched up to his expectation of what it should be like and created it to be.⁹ Only a transcendent God is capable of making this evaluation and only an imminent God would care to make it.

Fourth, by showing that God’s transcendence and immanence are embodied by his actions, the creation accounts proclaim God to be personal and relational. He enters into conversation when he says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Gen 1:26).¹⁰ He engages the creatures when he blesses them and says, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth” (Gen 1:22). He addresses humans when he commands them to, “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen 1:28) and then walks and talks with them in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:16–17; 3:9–14, 16–19). He dirties his hands like a potter when he forms the man from dust and breathes life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). Like a horticulturalist, he plants a garden and instructs the man to tend it. His zoological interests are highlighted when he introduces the man to the animals and allows him to get to know them and name them. He finally acts as a surgeon, anesthetizing the man, removing part of his side to make the woman, and closing up the wound. All this shows that God knows and cares for humans and the other creatures he made and provides for their needs.

Humans created in God’s image to rule¹¹

God’s relationship with and care for humans and the rest of creation establishes a paradigm for humans, teaching them how to relate to God, to one another, and to the other created things. As we consider what the creation passages say about these relationships, we find that several significant issues are introduced that influence the whole of biblical thought and should shape our thinking about the world in which we live and the way we treat it. One of the most remarkable concepts found in Genesis is that humans were created in the image of God. No other beings—not even angels—receive this distinction. Though many have tried to explain what this means, the Bible nowhere defines the term and uses it so infrequently that properly defining it is probably impossible.¹² Even so, the text is more concerned with the *function* of humans as God’s image than with its definition.¹³ This is related to the use of the idea in the ancient Near Eastern and other Semitic languages which considered kings to be the image of a god. As Dumbrell writes, “The designation of the king as the image of the god in Mesopotamia referred to his royal function as having a mandate from the god to rule and thus as one possessing divine power.”¹⁴ In Egyptian thought, Pharaoh was “the reigning copy of God on earth, his representative, his deputy, his reflection and his mode of appearance in the world.”¹⁵ Though the ancient world commonly understood the king’s relationship with God in such terms, the Bible turned this idea on its head and “democratized” it by proclaiming that *all* humans are made in God’s image and bear the stamp of royalty.

This royal function clarifies God’s command for humans to subdue the earth and rule over the animals (Gen 1:28; cf. Ps 8:59).¹⁶ Human dominion is rule “in his image,” rule under God. As such, it can be neither despotic nor destructive. Since “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps 24:1; cf. Ex 9:29; Lev 25:23), we need to understand God’s intentions and purposes for creation and do everything possible to ensure that it is fulfilled, knowing that God will hold us responsible for our actions. As Stott has written,

If ... our dominion over the earth has been delegated to

us by God, with a view to our co-operating with him and sharing its produce with others, then we are accountable to him for our stewardship. We have no liberty to do what we like with our natural environment; it is not ours to treat as we please.¹⁷

While a number of writers describe stewardship negatively, saying it evokes a managerial role that distances humans from the rest of creation,¹⁸ I find it useful as it acknowledges the biblical hierarchy that identifies God as the sovereign over all, humanity as the part of creation that serves as God's vice-regents, and the rest of creation over which humans are commanded to rule. The dominion of the steward is strictly limited under God's design. As Tubbs rightly says, "a steward is responsible for preserving and advancing those interests defined by the owner and is accountable to the owner for having done so."¹⁹ We see this in Genesis 2 where God plants a garden and put the man in it "to work it and take care of it" (Gen 2:15). These verbs, according to Hamilton, mean that "The garden is something to be protected more than it is something to be possessed."²⁰ The man who is given a beautiful and bountiful place to live is intended to maintain that condition for the benefit of both humanity and the rest of creation.

The Last Adam

The Bible makes it clear that this "edenic state" did not last long. Adam's fall shattered the relationships God designed for creation. The man who had been created to care for the garden was banished and Eden succumbed to the thorns and thistles that would ever be the bane of gardeners and farmers. The ones made in God's image to rule over everything by getting to know them and allowing them to do what God purposed failed in their task. Sin, not the biblical command to rule over nature, ruptured the relationships between humanity and the rest of creation that has led to the misuse of the natural world.

Even though the image of God was marred by the fall it was not destroyed. This becomes apparent when God "recreated" the world after the flood, bringing order from chaos and separating land from water.²¹ As in the first creation account he blessed humans, telling them to "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1). He similarly placed limits on humans regarding what they could do with the rest of creation (Gen 9:2–5) and let them know that mankind was created in God's image (Gen 9:6). These parallels indicate that humans are still responsible before God to care for creation in the post-fall world. Another sign that God's image was not destroyed is found in Jesus Christ, "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45–47), who—as God in the flesh—is the unique image of God, but who also demonstrates what human dominion should be like. Jesus came, not to be served, but as the servant-king who did what was best for humanity and the rest of creation. Brueggemann suitably says that:

a Christian understanding of dominion must be discerned in the way of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Mark 10:43–44). The one who rules is the one who serves. Lordship means servanthood. It is the task of the shepherd not to control but to lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). The human person is ordained over the remainder of creation but for its profit, well-being, and enhancement. The role of the human person is to see to it that the creation becomes fully the creation willed by God.²²

As God had placed Adam in the garden to work it and care for it, the Son of God came to serve.²³ And while his service included giving "his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28), it did not end with human salvation. According to Paul, Jesus—"the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation"—demonstrated God's love and glory by taking the preeminent position in creation and dying for the well-being of others. "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:15, 19–20).

The "*all things*" is significant. Jesus' sacrifice made it possible for sinful people to be reconciled with God. By dying on the cross, Jesus "rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves". By serving us through his death, the king places us under his rightful authority and both requires and enables us to obey his will. But he does more. As Jesus reconciles "all things"—including the physical universe—to himself, he reverses the effects of the fall. He heals all the relationships that were damaged by sin. He makes it possible for people to relate to God and the rest of creation according to God's original design.

"I WILL CREATE NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH"

The Bible's basic teaching on human care for creation is found in Genesis. This teaching is echoed throughout the Bible. The Psalms and Wisdom literature are a wonderful case in point, as they were written to praise the God who created and sustains everything.²⁴ The psalmists and sages regularly testify that God is more powerful than the natural forces that make humans feel utterly small. At times they view the universe with almost scientific objectivity to show the orderly processes God has woven into the fabric of creation. And they marvel that, despite the grandeur of the universe under his care, God retains a special place in his heart for humankind.

Psalms 8 is a key example of how this is worked out. In what is probably a conscious meditation on Genesis 1, the psalmist expresses amazement that the God who created the stars and set them in place as his "finger work" would elevate humans over everything. How can such an insignificant part of creation become ruler of all? How could God deem our kind to be "a little lower than the heavenly beings" (Ps 8:5), particularly when the word for "heavenly beings", or *elohim*, is regularly translated "God" or "the gods"? Slightly less than the angels. A little lower than God. The extremely high position given to humanity should move us to gape in astonishment and join the psalmist in saying, "O Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Ps 8:1, 9). Significantly, the psalm begins and ends with people who were appointed to rule over everything acknowledging the lordship of Yahweh. Their rule is subsumed under and should reflect his.

Also exalting Yahweh as the sovereign of the world is Psalm 104 which describes him as being "clothed with splendor and majesty" (v 1). This poetic description of the Lord sets him off as the powerful creator of the great things—sun, moon, mountains, and seas—and things deemed less significant—birds, grass, wild goats, and coney. Nevertheless, he cares for the things he made and provides all that they need. God's power is so great that he



can give breath to all creatures and then take it away. He is the Lord of life itself. As the psalmist (and the singer) considers God's work in the world, his rightful response is to rejoice and praise the Lord and then express his desire that his thoughts would be pleasing to him (vv 33–35).

Outside of Genesis and the Psalms, one of the most important passages on God's creative power is Job 38–41. As in many other passages, God is here the sovereign over creation. But the text has an even more important place in the book as it compares God's wisdom and power with the feebleness of man. All through the book, Job had been hoping to defend himself before God. However, when his chance came, Job was totally taken aback. The man who proved himself wiser than his peers by refuting all their claims is silenced when God queries his knowledge of the natural world. While Job doesn't speak because he doesn't know, God both knows and exerts control over everything. God refuses to defend himself or respond to Job's demand to know why he was suffering. Instead, he rebukes him for questioning his justice (40:8) and lets him know that man's wisdom adds up to nothing. Only God is truly wise. Only he knows how he created the natural world and how the moral world operates. Job is forced to humbly acknowledge his ignorance and repent (40:4–5). Job's experience should serve as a caution for anyone who thinks he knows the ultimate purpose in the world beyond what God has chosen to reveal.

The theme of creation is picked up by Isaiah in a number of key passages where he encourages his readers that God will comfort his exiled people. As the prophet considers their future salvation, he reports that the Lord will bare his mighty arm and restore their land so it will resemble, not a wilderness, but Eden (Isa 49:13; 51:3–5, 12; 52:9–10; 66:13). In chapter 40, the prophet sings the good news that the Lord will come to free the captives and restore the land. Yahweh's advent puts human leaders in their place. They are not to be feared because they are like the grass that quickly withers, like insignificant grasshoppers, or like chaff that the wind blows away (vv 6–8, 22, 24). The rulers of nations and their idols are together powerless. The one who created the heavens and holds them together cares so much for his people that he gathers and protects them like lambs enfolded in the arms of a shepherd. Though he sets the stars in place and calls them all by name, he never forgets his people. Untiring and all knowing, he meets their needs, giving strength to all who hope in him.

In Isaiah 65, the caring creator announces his plans for creating a new heavens and a new earth: a world not unlike the original creation. The God who had pronounced everything to be very good again rejoices over his people and blesses them, ensuring that they will enjoy the fruit of their labor without fear of exile. As this "peaceable kingdom" has been freed from the curse of the fall, work will not be characterized by sweat and toil but will bring joy. Long lives will be the norm. Even the animals will get along with one another; carnivores adopting a vegetarian diet. But how will it come about? When will it be experienced?

The "when" is known only to God. The "how" has been revealed in the New Testament which tells the story of Jesus, the Word of God, who was not only with God at creation but was himself the creator who entered creation for the sake of his people (John 1:1–14, cf. Eph 3:9; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2; Rev 4:11). He was the God who first appeared as the lowly son of David but was revealed to

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have power by his resurrection from the dead (Isa 40:10; Rom 1:4). As the one who holds creation together and serves as its goal, Jesus came to earth "to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:16–20). Though Paul goes on to focus on the humans who are reconciled to God (Col 1:21–22) his initial statements are universal in scope. The whole of creation needs to be reconciled to God. Furthermore, this reconciliation is accomplished by the blood of Jesus. As the missiological implications of this are enormous, a deeper examination is essential.

While Colossians says that Christ's sacrificial death reconciles creation to God, it does not mention what separated them. Part of the answer is found in Rom 8:20–22 where Paul writes that creation was subjected to frustration due to human sin. From the time of the fall, it has been groaning because it cannot properly fulfill its creative purpose as long as humans do not play their proper role as rulers over creation.²⁵ The groans of creation should be seen as portents that a new order is coming. The good news of the passage—the "hope" upon which it turns—is that creation is liberated when people are redeemed and begin living as they were created to live. All of creation gains when people come under the kingdom reign of Jesus Christ and live as God's image on earth.

The Bible's teaching about the place of humanity in the created order comes full circle in two New Testament passages that show that God's original intentions for creation will be realized in the new heavens and new earth. Curiously, the first of these passages is sometimes cited as proof that our treatment of the earth does not matter as everything will eventually be burned up. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" or as many ancient manuscripts render the final word, "will be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10). While the textual critical problems surrounding this verse are so immense that its exact meaning is impossible to ascertain,²⁶ two ideas are clearly taught in the overall context. The first places the judgment by fire in a parallel position to the judgment by water in Noah's time. God sent the flood to cleanse the earth of sin and re-create the world so that it could be inhabited again. As the flood gave way to a new creation, the fiery judgment will lead to a new heaven and new earth where God's people will live. The eternal state is clearly physical. The redeemed will have bodies and dwell on earth.

This leads to the second point of the passage: the future judgment of the earth should spur us on to ethical living in our present

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time. Since the new heavens and new earth will be “the home of righteousness” (NIV), or the place “in which righteousness dwells” (ESV, NASB; 2 Pet 3:13), God desires that our relationships with him and every part of creation are set right. That’s why Peter encourages his readers to “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace” with God (2 Pet 3:14). As God looked for a righteous man in the days of the flood, he looks for righteous people in our wickedness and corrupt age to fulfill his creational designs.

The final picture of the new heavens and earth is in Revelation 21–22, which is rightly recognized as being closely linked to Genesis 1–3 as it promotes both royal and Edenic themes.²⁷ This passage begins with God and the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven so that they are found together on the earth.²⁸ The main picture is of a garden-city that has been freed from the curse that has marred creation since the first couple sinned (Rev 22:3; cf. Gen 3:17). Struggling for one’s livelihood in a world of thorns and thistles is a thing of the past. Built along the river of the water of life, this city is home to the tree of life which produces a continual harvest and brings healing to all (Rev 22:1–2). The city is home to the throne of God and of the Lamb, the place where he rules over creation and where his people serve him (Rev 22:3). This leads to an important question. How do they serve him? They serve him by reigning with him forever and ever (Rev 22:5). The ties with Genesis bring meaning to the text here. In the beginning God created humans in his image to walk with him in the Garden and exert dominion over the earth and all its creatures. The parallelism in Revelation makes it clear that humans will reign in the new creation over the rest of the created order. That is what they were intended to do from the first, and it is what they will do in the end.

APPLICATION FOR MISSIONS

The Bible’s teaching on the relationship between humans and their environment stretches from the first to the last chapters. Reflecting on this message shows that right thinking should lead to right practice. As *The Cape Town Commitment* begins with a confession of faith and ends with a call to action, we will conclude our exposition with some suggestions that should influence our practice.

First, as people made in God’s image, we should take up our responsibility to care for and tend the world in which we live. We should do this as stewards of the One who owns it all. This requires that we get to know our environment better and gives us

reason to rejoice in the diversity and intricacy God has designed on the macro and micro levels. In practical terms, we should learn something about the flora and fauna and natural geography of the place we live. As the first man interacted with the animals and named them, we should learn the names of local plants and animals and discover what makes them special. At the same time, we should do what we can to ensure that each creature is able to do what God created it to do. It may well be that this is the way the non-sentient beings are freed to worship God—by fulfilling their created function for the Lord’s pleasure.

Second, we should do our best to live simple lifestyles that minimize consumption, pollution, and environmental destruction. Missionary societies have long encouraged living simply for the sake of the people served. In the light of the Bible’s teaching on the place of humans within creation, we should promote simple living for the sake of the physical world and all the life forms it contains.

Third, the creational commission for the man to maintain the Garden should compel us to preserve the earth’s resources and restore those that have been damaged. There is wide scope for individual missionaries and agencies to engage in conservation and ecological restoration. Not only is this a way to act out our dominion over creation, it is a way to model it so that others created in God’s image can do the same. Agricultural experts can similarly introduce crops and techniques that will benefit humans without despoiling the natural environment or causing other species to lose their habitat.

Fourth, we can take up the challenge laid out in *The Cape Town Commitment* of treating creation care as a gospel issue. This is not to say that environmentalism should be seen as an essential element in every presentation of the gospel. It is not some kind of fifth spiritual law. However, when we recognize that the good news of Jesus Christ extends beyond a personal commitment of faith and includes all that he has done as Creator and Redeemer and Sustainer and Friend, it becomes clear that the gospel is multi-dimensional and extends to all of life. Creation care is thus subsumed under that aspect of discipleship that Jesus calls, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20). It is, in this sense, a gospel issue. It is good news for the nations and good news for all of creation.



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NOTES

¹ *The Cape Town Commitment* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011), 19.

² This began with the article by Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155, No. 3767 (10 March 1967): 1203–1207. White declares Christianity guilty of two crimes: a radical anthropocentrism that makes humans superior to the rest of creation and a desacralization of nature that eradicates the ancient belief that each part has its own spiritual essence if not animating spirit. The result is that humans can “exploit nature in



a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects” (1205).

³ Loren Wilkinson, “The Uneasy Conscience of the Human Race: Rediscovering Creation in the ‘Environmental’ Movement,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 308–310.

⁴ Wilkinson, “The Uneasy Conscience,” 309–310.

⁵ The Genesis accounts are recognized to be a polemic against other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts. See Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (April–June 1974): 81–102; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), xlvii.

⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1.

⁷ Gunton believes that defining transcendence and immanence as alternative or opposite concepts means that the more God is seen as transcendent the less he is viewed as immanent. He suggests replacing these terms with “otherness” and “relation,” which act as “correlatives which require and interpret each other,” rather than opposites that cancel out each other. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 170–171. Cf. Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 45–46, 79.

⁸ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. by David G. Preston (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1984), 68. Cf. George A. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, Biblical and Theological Classics Library (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 98.

⁹ That God evaluated creation as “good” before he made the man rebuts the idea that the world was simply made for human use. Westermann asks, “But for what or for whom can creation be good? One cannot say for man, because man is a part of it. Nor can man say: for God, because God has created his work for everyone or for something. It can only mean that Creation is good for that for which God intends it.” Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 61.

¹⁰ The difficult question as to whom God address here has led to at least seven different explanations. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27–28; David J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 62–69; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 133–134. For a stimulating study that bases ecological ethics on Trinitarian relationships, see Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*.

¹¹ I have elsewhere written on this issue in greater detail. Walter McConnell, “In His Image: A Christian’s Place in Creation,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 20 (April 2006): 114–127.

¹² It is only found four times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 1:26, 27 [twice]; 9:6).

¹³ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 58.

¹⁴ William J. Dumbrell, “Creation, Covenant and Work,” in *With Heart, Mind and Strength: The Best of Crux — 1979–1989 Volume One*, ed. Donald Lewis (Langley, BC: Credo, 1990), 156.

¹⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM, 1985), 219.

¹⁶ In spite of claims that human dominion over creation is inherently despotic, a proper understanding of the term highlights human responsibility to care for the world. See Bernhard W.

Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 111–131; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 32–33; Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1992), 99.

¹⁷ John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), 115.

¹⁸ See James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon and Washington, DC: The Church’s Center for Theology and Public Policy, 1991), 107; Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 128–30.

¹⁹ James B. Tubbs, “Humble Dominion,” *Theology Today* 50 (January 1994): 550.

²⁰ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 171.

²¹ The flood returned creation to chaos as a punishment for the corrupt actions of people. See Susan Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation*, SBL Studies in Humanities 6 (Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1985), 22. The reversion to chaos was only temporary. The parallels between Genesis 1–3 and chapters 6–9 indicate that the post-flood world was considered a new creation exhibiting continuity and discontinuity with the original creation. See L. H. Osborn, “Creation” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 432–433; Gary V. Smith “Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1–11,” *JETS* 20 (December 1977): 310–311; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 127–129; Norman Young, *Creator, Creation and Faith* (London: Collins, 1976), 37.

²² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 32–33.

²³ The Hebrew word translated “to work it” in the NIV of Gen 2:15 literally means “to serve”. When used in farming it takes the meaning “to till” or “to cultivate”.

²⁴ Scholars have long recognized that creation is one of the major themes in wisdom literature. See Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994). Westermann finds direct correspondence between wisdom and Genesis 1–3. Claus Westermann, *Roots of Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 120.

²⁵ See Charles E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 413–414.

²⁶ See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 705–706.

²⁷ See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 1111, 1114–15.

²⁸ Whether one understands the new Jerusalem to be a literal city where the redeemed in Christ will live or a symbol for redeemed themselves—“prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband”—the text supports the idea that the eternal state is earthly.