



Foreword by JOHN STOTT

Edited by Sarah Tillet

CARING FOR CREATION

Biblical and theological perspectives

Contributors include **Peter and Miranda Harris, John Houghton, James Houston, Eugene Peterson, Ghilleen Prance, Vinoth Ramachandra, Chris Wright**

INTRODUCTION

The destruction of habitats in many countries around the world is one of the main causes for the current loss of a wide variety of plant and animal species in their natural environment (biodiversity). The decline of biodiversity can be rapid and dramatic or very slow. Either way, the consequences of the loss of biodiversity affect the capacity of the land to sustain human needs and diminish the world's wealth of plants and animals.

In the Bible, God creates men and women in his own image and asks us to reflect his image in our stewardship over 'the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground' (Genesis 1:26). The image we reflect should be one of unselfish love, mercy, tender compassion and justice. Unfortunately, our rebellious human nature makes us selfish, and our concern for the world we live in is often characterized by cruelty, greed and short-sightedness rather than love and compassion. The environment is an issue of justice, and when the environment is damaged it is often the poor who suffer the most.

In a global context it is easy to be overwhelmed by the problems of the destruction of the environment: deforestation, disintegration of coral reefs, the extinction of species, over-fishing, global warming and a multitude of other disasters and gloomy forecasts can cause us to wonder if our pitiful action will really make any difference. But the Bible clearly shows us that there are grounds for hope. Both Isaiah and Hosea prophesy about a time to come when there will be human and environmental harmony. In the New Testament Jesus is described as the Saviour of fallen humanity, and also the one for whom all creation was made and through whom all creation will one day be liberated from its bondage to decay.

Many ecologists, environmentalists and economists hold the view that religion has been the primary cause of ecological crisis and that it has little to offer in the robust scientific debates surrounding issues such as global warming and species extinction. It has also been suggested that anti-intellectualism in the Church has blocked the way for any Christian influence in scientific debates. Mark Noll argues in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* that early evangelicalism abandoned the academy to

the enlightened scientists and lost its credibility as an influence in our Western cultures, only to focus on conversionism, biblicism and activism. He claimed that Christians were living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence: 'To be spiritual one must no longer pay attention to the world.'¹ Care for the world has been seen as some loony green association with the environmental movement. Ronald Sider, a principal sponsor of the Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation,² proposes that the science of modern environmentalism and the spiritual quest it represents can only be fulfilled through using biblical truth as the foundation for working seriously at our environmental problems.

This book brings together some of the main biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption and resurrection, the way that they relate to God's concern for his creation and the God-given human responsibility to care for, preserve and develop his Earth on his behalf. It aims to address some of the misconceptions and misinterpretations of many Christians and ecologists regarding the care of creation, and it aims to create awareness of the possibilities for combining rigorous but wise use of science and technology with responsible environmental stewardship in accordance with Christian principles. Stories from the A Rocha centres around the world illustrate how technical scientific knowledge and a biblical ethos are brought together to develop sustainable communities, demonstrating good environmental stewardship and encouraging others to similar action.

Environmental issues are a growing concern for many people, religious and non-religious alike. This book offers a biblical, theological and spiritual springboard from which we can launch discussions and debate and explore opportunities for growth and awareness as responsible stewards of God's creation. Eugene Peterson challenges us to read Genesis 1 with a new perspective, not just as the story of how things began but as a way to live today. This, says Peterson, means 'keeping creation time' as though it were a gift from God. The new perspective on time 'erects a bastion in time against the commodification of time, reducing time to money or what we can get out of it'. A Rocha Canada's story illustrates the keeping of creation time in the life cycles of the Pacific salmon, whose instinctive bell rings, telling it to return home to the stream where it was spawned in order to spawn and then die.

Physicist John Houghton argues from scripture that true science and true religion do indeed go hand in hand and illuminate each other. On the ground, though, the light has not yet dawned, as A Rocha India grapples

with the conflict between the Indian elephant and local communities in Bannerghatta National Park.

Biblically, the root of all the environmental problems lies at the feet of fallen humanity and our rejection of the creator. Sam Berry explores a way of understanding the story of fallen humanity against the background of the 21st century. Peter Harris suggests a re-reading of God's covenant with Noah that is less anthropocentric and that incorporates the whole of God's creation, opening a door to the redemption of all that God has made.

Chris Wright points to a way of ethical living that is deeply embedded in Old Testament scriptures and jubilee laws. The sense of hopelessness we feel about effecting change in our world is in some ways appropriate if we are to understand the limitations of humanity in a proper relationship to God. James Houston considers the development of theological thinking and the cultural influences that have led to human independence from God. Most theologians recognize that there is an eschatological purpose in creation and Houston highlights the significance of the Sabbath in understanding the consummation of God's work of creation and his purposes in redemption. He says that Sabbath rest is a reminder that 'I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6, NRSV).

We do not know how the redemption of creation will take place. We do know that we have a part to play and a God-given responsibility towards all that God has made. Therefore we can be sure that God, who created and sustains his world, wants all his people to be actively involved in his plan to redeem the whole of creation. So our hope is in the words of Revelation 21:1–5:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

A ROCHA

A Rocha is an international Christian organization dedicated to environmental conservation, and a registered charity. It was launched in Portugal in 1983 and focuses primarily on community-based projects. *A Rocha* is Portuguese and means 'The Rock'. The name has a threefold significance for the organization: firstly it is taken from the name of the headland in Portugal where the first project was established, *Quinta da Rocha*; secondly it indicates the solid basis of scientific studies practised through A Rocha's various centres; and finally, 'the rock' is a biblical description of the nature of God and affirms A Rocha's Christian distinctiveness.

A Rocha currently works in 15 countries, across five continents, including the UK. It is also a member of IUCN (the International Conservation Union). The work of A Rocha across the world is identified by the practical outworking of five core commitments:

- **Christian:** Underlying all it does is biblical faith in the living God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.
- **Conservation:** A Rocha carries out research for the conservation and restoration of the natural world and runs environmental education programmes for people of all ages.
- **Community:** Through commitment to God, fellow human beings and the wider creation, A Rocha aims to develop good relationships both within the A Rocha 'family' and in local communities where the charity works.
- **Cross-cultural:** It draws on the insights and skills of people from diverse cultures, both locally and around the world.
- **Cooperation:** It works in partnership with a wide variety of organizations and individuals who share A Rocha's concern for a sustainable world.

A Rocha UK was founded in 2001 by the Revd Dave Bookless and his wife Anne. The organization is interdenominational and a member of the Evangelical Alliance. It has a long-term vision with the following objectives:

- To learn from and share with A Rocha's international family of projects, encouraging and supporting conservation work around the world.

- To create a network of Christ-centred, community-based, practical conservation projects throughout the UK.
- To encourage the Church to understand the biblical responsibility to act as good stewards of God's world, and to provide practical advice on how to go about this.
- To advocate and resource action locally, nationally and internationally, in pursuit of environmental protection and sustainable development.
- To produce educational material for schools and churches, including material to celebrate Environment Sunday (formerly Conservation Sunday) on the Sunday closest to World Environment Day (5 June).
- To offer advice to Christian landowners, organizations and farmers on a biblical and practical approach to stewardship of the earth.

A Rocha UK's first project is 'Living Waterways', a community-centred project based in multi-cultural Southall and Hayes, London. The project has led to the restoration of 90 acres of derelict land into the Minet Country Park and nature area—the result of a successful campaign with local landowners, Hillingdon Council and other community groups. The park has wildlife conservation areas, open recreational space and a children's playground; it was formerly home to burnt-out cars, fly-tipped waste and illegal motorbike scrambling. It has been shortlisted for the London Planning Awards (for partnership with a local authority) and the 'Faithworks' awards for faith-inspired community projects (administered by the Oasis Trust and Spring Harvest). A Rocha UK has a community house and field study centre in Southall, where the UK team of twelve are based and volunteers can stay.

A Rocha UK is a registered charity with a council of reference that includes the Rt Revd James Jones, Sir John Houghton, Sir Ghillean Prance, Ram Gidoomal CBE, the Revd Dr Rob Frost, the Revd Steve Chalke, Dr Elaine Storkey and Professor Graham Ashworth.

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CREATION AND THE GIFT OF TIME

Eugene Peterson

The Holy Spirit has descended on this old world of ours. Psalm 29 asks us to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. We look around and there it is: a grace revealing gesture, fresh snowfall, a friend's forgiveness, the first migrating yellow warbler, a miracle conversion, a truth-telling poem, pasque-flower in bloom, the good death of a parent, resurrection, Father Son and Holy Spirit, all the endless permutations of life—the beauty of holiness—and we have ringside seats. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

EUGENE PETERSON, SEATTLE 2001

The two creation stories, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, set at the entrance to our Bibles, are primarily texts for living in the time and the place that we wake up to each morning.

Each has been studied meticulously by both Jewish and Christian scholars for a couple of thousand years, and their accumulated insights and truths stagger our imaginations. There is so much here to consider and ponder, to appreciate and respond to. What is sometimes missed in this cascade of exegetical brilliance, pouring out of the work of scholars of Genesis 1 and 2, is how skilfully and well these texts lead us ordinary working Christians into the land of the living.

It is easy to miss the personal immediacy of Genesis 1 and 2, as we are sometimes distracted by the polemical debates that involve the big cosmological questions about how things began, or are tempted to use the texts to pick fights with atheists. For a time I was caught up in both of these distractions but also intoxicated with the words, images and syntax, comparing and evaluating these creation stories and contrasting the worlds in ancient Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations.

The challenge in Genesis is to shift from understanding the text as the

beginning of all things to listening to the text as a way to begin to live now. When I became a pastor, I gradually realized what powerful texts these are for dealing with life just as we live it day after day. As a pastor, the focus of my life has been to pray and preach and teach the holy scriptures into the lives of everyday people: husbands and wives raising children, engineers building bridges, farmers in the wheat fields and arthritic 80-year-olds in nursing homes. In the course of doing that, I came to think of Genesis 1 and 2 as among the most uninterpreted and under-used texts for shaping an obedient and reverent life, following Jesus in our daily working and worshipping lives.

A PEOPLE IN EXILE

First, I was struck by how the cultural and spiritual conditions in which we are living matched the conditions of the Hebrew people of God in the sixth century BC, a century of exile. The pervasive uprootedness, loss of biblical tradition, lack of moral consensus and common memories, and living far removed from where we grew up, have left people with little sense of place or grounding. These are exile conditions. That is when I discovered the exile texts of Isaiah, pastoral messages to people who have lost touch with their time and place in the world. One of the most important words used by the prophet Isaiah is 'create'. In the Bible it is used exclusively with God as the subject: men and women don't create—God does. When nothing we do makes any difference and we are left standing around clueless, then we are ready for God to create. When the conditions in which we live seem totally alien to life and salvation, we are reduced to waiting for what God can do. The verb 'to create' and the noun 'creator' appear more times in the exilic preaching of Isaiah than in any other place in the Bible (17 times in Isaiah compared to six times in Genesis 1).

In Isaiah, the immediate, powerful, convincing and life-changing creation work of God is among people who feel uncreated, unformed, unfitted for the world in which they find themselves. Under Isaiah's prophetic influence, 'create' emerges from the background of Israel's history into an actively gospel word for what God is doing today around the exile people of today (Isaiah 61).

THE GIFT OF TIME

When we read Genesis from this shifted perspective, we have to ask the question, how can I obey this and live within the gift of God's creation? Genesis 1 presents the gift of creation as the gift of time (Genesis 2 presents the gift of place). The understanding and honouring of time is fundamental to the realization of how we are and how we live. Violations of sacred time become desecrations of our most intimate relations with God and one another. Hours and days, weeks and months and years, these are the stuff of holiness.

One of the many desecrations visited on the creation, the profanation of time ranks near the top. Time is the medium in which we do all our living. When time is desecrated, life is desecrated. Evidence of this desecration is identified through hurry and procrastination. Both violate the sacredness of time. Hurry turns away from the gift of time in a compulsive grasping for abstractions that are not immediately there, but that it can possess and control. Procrastination is distracted from the gift of time in a lazy inattentiveness to the life of obedience and adoration by which we enter into what the apostle Paul called the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). Genesis 1 is not in a hurry and does not procrastinate.

One of the greatest hindrances to our understanding of the creation gift of time has been a distracted focus and overemphasis on end-times, particularly for those caught up in waiting for the rapture. Ordinary time is not what biblical people endure or put up with until the end-time; it is a gift. End-time influences present time by charging it and filling it with purpose and significance. It is not a future we wait for, but the fullness of time flowing into the present that we receive and live in, in adoration and obedience.

In order to understand the creation gift of time, we must look at the structure of Genesis. The first creation account is arranged in a seven-day sequence. Six times the creation work is introduced with 'And God said'. Six times the segment is concluded with the phrase 'there was evening, and there was morning'. The seventh day is treated differently, which sets it apart for special emphasis and attention. For example, instead of the number being in the concluding phrase of the segment, it is introductory: 'on the seventh day' (2:2). The number seven is repeated twice more in successive sentences: 'By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing'; 'so on the seventh day he rested from all his work'; 'And

God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done' (2:2–3).

The emphasis is quite different from the rhythm set up in the first six days. God's work of creation is conveyed to us rhythmically: one-two-three / four-five-six / seven-seven-seven (1-2-3 / 4-5-6 / 7-7-7). There are two sets of three days each of creation activity. In the first set of three (1-2-3), the pre-creation chaos mentioned in Genesis 1:2 is *formed*. In the second set of three (4-5-6), the pre-creation emptiness is *filled*. These two sets of creation work, forming and filling, are followed by seventh-day rest in triple emphasis. The third day of each three-day sequence is set apart by having two creation acts, setting up a cadence of one-two-three/three, one-two-three/three, seven/seven/seven. Genesis 1 is a skilfully and rhythmically arranged set of words.

In the past, the text would have been read aloud, enabling the listener to hear and enter into the rhythms of time, internalizing and assimilating the rhythms like a piece of music, 'keeping time'. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke calls this the libretto for all of Israel's life. Think of Genesis 1 as an opera and oratorio, expressing the creation rhythms in our language and our work: we are created to live rhythmically.

The seven days of creation are repeated in a sequence of 28 days as the moon circles the earth, and this lunar rhythm is then repeated twelve times. These large rhythms bring us spring birth, summer growth, autumn harvest and winter sleep. Time is rhythmic; we are immersed in rhythms. Life is rhythmic. We ourselves are created rhythmically. We have a pulse that beats; our breath is rhythmic. Our bodies function in cycles of metabolic rhythms. You can speed up or slow down rhythm but you cannot eliminate it. We can disrupt the rhythms, but when we do, we are not living in the created way of our bodies.

The rhythms of time are resolved into the seventh pause—rest, a not doing. The structure of the segments is changed totally. The great Semitic scholar Umberto Cassuto pointed out that each of the sentences in the paragraph in which 'seven' is introduced (Genesis 2:2–3) has seven words, and the seven-day paragraph has 35 words, a multiple of seven. Genesis 1 points to the seventh day as the clue to the meaning of creation. If we are going to live out the theology of creation, we must be personally involved with the seventh day, the Sabbath. Our involvement is made explicit in the Sinai command to keep the Sabbath holy. In the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath is the only creation action that gets

attached to a commandment. This means that God's sabbatical rest is something in which we can participate. We can participate in God's creation work. Sabbath is our point of entry into creation.

The scholar Jon Levenson stresses that Genesis 1 accentuates the possibility of human access to the creation rhythms themselves. If Genesis 1 is the text for our understanding and participation in creation, then the Sabbath is the point of entry. The Sinai command is given in two forms, one in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy. The commands are almost identical in the two listings except for the supporting reason, which is different. The Exodus text says:

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work... **For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.***

EXODUS 20:8-11

The Deuteronomy text says:

*Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work... **Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.***

DEUTERONOMY 5:12-15

The Exodus command is endorsed by the precedence of God, who rested on the seventh day. When we remember the Sabbath and rest on it, we enter into and participate in and maintain the rhythm of creation, and keep time with God. The Deuteronomy command is endorsed by a sense of social justice. When we remember the Sabbath and rest on it, we enter into and participate in the freedom of creation, the freedom to experience and share God's deliverance.

Keeping creation time preserves time as God's gift of holy rest; it erects a bastion in time against the commodification of time, reducing time to

money or what we can get out of it, and having no time for beauty or anything that cannot be purchased or used. The Sabbath command is a defence against the hurry that desecrates time. It preserves and honours time as God's gift of holy freedom. It erects a weekly bastion against the lethargic procrastination that breeds oppression, that lets injustice flourish because we are not attending in obedience and adoration to people and animals and our environment.

CREATION CONTEMPLATION

The Genesis creation days are resolved in an act of rest. The word 'rest' expands and deepens for us if we use a more complex word: 'contemplation'. Contemplation is the practice of assimilating what is given to us and receiving it into our minds and spirits. There is nothing passive or withdrawn about contemplation. It is highly active, deeply energetic; it is neither hurried nor lazy. It requires being present to another, the Other, so that what we cannot do can be done to us through God's creation and the completion of his creation.

Worship is an extension of contemplation. How do we get in touch with God and live more or less in step with God? The obvious answer might be to watch the salmon run or to get a pair of binoculars and take up bird-watching, and become familiar with the colourful ways of hawks and warblers. Or we could get a fly-rod, learn to read the rivers, study which insects are fancied by the fish, and learn how to cast a line lightly on to the waters that are home to brown trout. But the obvious answer is not the right answer. The best thing we can do is to enter a church and worship God. There is ancient and widespread evidence that connects world-making (that is, creation) with temple building (that is, worship) or church building (which serves worship). There is also evidence around the world that connects the ordering of worship and the creation of the world. The point of church building is to realize and extend creation through human enactment, through praise and prayer and by rehearsing and embracing the commandments, promises and blessings of God and putting them into action in the world that we live in. Architecturally, it is to give some symbolic hint and connection between what we are doing in the church and outside the church.

The way in which this Genesis text and the creation gift of time get

inside us is through the act of worship. Worship is the primary means in which we become participants in God's work, but if we are not in touch with the way he works, things are diminished considerably. The Genesis work rhythms are brought into focus in the Sabbath rest commands and are reproduced in our lives in the act of worship in a way that enables us to participate. Then, when we walk out of the place of worship, we walk out with fresh recognizing eyes, with a recreated obedient heart into the world in which we are God's image, participating in God's work. Everything we see, feel, touch and taste carries within it the rhythms of 'and God said, "Let there be"'... 'and it was so'... 'and it was good'. We are more deeply in and at home in the creation than ever.

There is a story in Exodus that illustrates this clearly. In Exodus 31—40, Moses goes up on the mountain to receive the Commandments. The story begins and ends with God's command for the people of Israel to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 31:12–18; 35:1–3). The people of Israel are left waiting at the bottom of the mountain, and they get impatient because they don't know how to deal with time. They are in a hurry to get their hands on something, and so they make a golden calf and worship that. Moses brings down instructions for the tabernacle where they will worship; when he sees their idolatrous behaviour, he smashes the stone tablets in anger and then pleads with God to save the people of Israel.

The instructions for the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 26—40) provide a way to get the Genesis 1 creation rhythms into their lives. Bezalel and Oholiab are the master builders chosen by God to oversee the work and teach others the skills required to build the tabernacle. Bezalel is filled with the creation spirit (*ruah Elohim*), the same spirit that moved over the face of the waters in Genesis 1. In Exodus 40:33, we are told that Moses 'finished the work'—the same phrase used of God's creation work in Genesis 2:2. Is this a coincidence? We are meant to see that Genesis 1 and 2 and Exodus 26—40 are the working out of creation and the way that we live.

The intimate connection between the world of creation and the world of worship is as significant today as it was when the tabernacle was first built in the wilderness. This connection between the world of creation and the world of worship is often ignored; for many it is obscured beyond recognition. The connection is totally lost when Christian people focus entirely on the end-times and the rapture. I would describe this as a creation-denying escape from time. It describes a condition that relentlessly

pervades and secularizes a culture that has no context in creation.

The conditions in which God began to create are described in Genesis 1 as ‘without form and void... darkness was upon the face of the deep’ (v. 2, RSV). It was a black soup of nothingness, formless and empty: chaos. These continue to be the conditions in which creation takes place. The condition of the world today is like this. As I stand in the congregation, I feel that I am in the presence of something very much like this. I also believe that over the black abyss of watery chaos, the Spirit of God is moving, and breathing over the chaos of our current culture. There is a hint of a picture in the Genesis phrase of the Spirit of God ‘moving’ or ‘hovering’: the same verb is used in Deuteronomy 32:11 of an eagle nurturing or hovering over its young and its nest. The most well-known use of a bird to picture the moving Spirit of God is in the Gospel story of Jesus’ baptism, in which we see the Spirit of God descending like a dove, followed by a voice from heaven saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’ (Matthew 3:17, NRSV).

These first Genesis words are lapidary, stark and spare. Creation takes place at the conjunction of a vast watery chaos and the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is alive and present, descending upon and hovering over the chaos, and then the voice speaks: ‘Let there be light’, followed by seven more world-creating, life-creating verbs.

Every time I step into a pulpit in a church, or stand behind a lectern in a lecture hall, or sit in someone’s kitchen talking about their lives, I am living out the conditions of Genesis 1, confronted by the formlessness and the void in people’s lives in community and culture, but believing in the present and moving Spirit of God. Then the great life-creating gospel verbs are said and sung, verbs given their fullest articulation in Jesus. It’s not just what pastors do; all of us do this—or can do it. Physicians say that they feel the same thing in their surgeries, farmers as they work their fields, parents as they look after their children. I can’t imagine any work or condition in which the Genesis 1 text is not timely for reviving the sacred rhythms in which we are privileged to participate each and every day.

One of the most fulfilling things about being a pastor is entering the mess of a person’s life—hearing, listening to and embracing it—praying, staying there day after day, year after year, and, in the process, hearing God whisper endless variations on ‘Let there be...’ and experiencing the coming together of one more detail of the creation and aspect of salvation, ‘... and it was so’. If we are going to be involved in God’s creation work,

we cannot avoid the mess. It cannot be denied, detoured, hurried through or procrastinated about. The mess—‘without form and void’—is the biblical stuff of creation.

We must be present and enter the gift of rhythmic time in the midst of this mess, where the Spirit of God is moving and speaking creation and salvation into existence. When you write a poem, how many drafts do you throw away? When you paint a picture, how many tries before you get it right? When you get married, how many years does it take before you develop the habits of the heart and emotional maturity adequate for love? If you have a child, how long does it take you to get used to the absolute otherness of this life? Every creative act begins in the mess. Creation cannot be imposed mechanically on the mess.

Creation brings life, love and maturity out of darkness. It is how creation began and how creation continues and goes on around us as God’s Spirit moves over the mess. It is both in us and all around us as God speaks heaven and earth into being. Everything we see and don’t see is breathed into existence by God’s word. There is so much around us to see, touch and taste; so much being desecrated, polluted and exploited by harassed and hurried men and women. 11 September 2001 is a great reminder of the chaos.

When we are trained in holy adoration, practised in the rhythms of a holy creation, the Sabbath-shaped week prepares us to give witness in detail of what happens when God speaks, and then to invite others to participate in receiving and caring for the whole of creation right now.



PACIFIC SALMON: LINKING COASTAL FORESTS AND DEEP OCEANS

Leah Kostamo, A Rocha Canada

Few animals on Canada's Pacific Coast symbolize the link between forest and ocean eco-systems better than Pacific salmon. It's the old 'hip-bone-is-connected-to-the-thigh-bone' song and dance, but with an ecological twist, all done against the backdrop of one of creation's greatest migration cycles.

Beginning their lives in freshwater lakes, rivers and streams, the juvenile salmon spend a few months to a few years in fresh water before they head out to sea, where they will grow up to 23kg (50 pounds). The fare that enables them to pack on 98 per cent of their adult weight includes plankton, shrimp, anchovies and herring, to name a few.

At some point in each salmon's life, an instinctual bell goes off, telling it to return home. For some species this is relatively simple, as they have not ventured further than 150 miles from their home stream, but for others, like the Chinook who often travel as far as 2500 miles from their natal stream, it is an astounding feat. Not only do the vast majority of salmon migrate back to the stream in which they were spawned, but most make it within a few hundred metres of their birthplace. Scientists are unclear about how salmon find their way back to their natal stream, but evidently they use their sense of smell (a fish with a plugged nose can't find its way back).

Once back in fresh water, the drama heightens. Females return with bodies bulging with eggs. Males are often battered, with humped backs and torn fins, as they make the strenuous race against time to the spawning beds. The last leg of a salmon's life might seem macabre to those wanting to anthropomorphize their homecoming, but the spawning and subsequent death of salmon is one of the great connecting agents between the ecology of the ocean and that of the coastal forests of western Canada. Some 22 species of mammals and birds feed directly on living or dead

salmon, from grizzlies to bald eagles to stoneflies. And so the cycle goes, as nutrients from a saltwater shrimp are transferred to a migrating Chinook salmon, who loses the spawning race to a hungry grizzly, who leaves his droppings at the base of a Douglas fir seedling, which grows to a towering height thanks to the annual influx of fertilizer that coincides with the salmon run—and everyone scratches his or her head and wonders how that tree got so big, never dreaming it had anything to do with a measly shrimp.

Hazards abound for the Pacific salmon, threatening their habitat. Foremost among them are urbanization and resource extraction, which both lead to the loss of habitat in coastal British Columbia. A Rocha Canada has been working to protect and restore salmon habitat, in order to ensure that this amazing creature continues to thrive. In North Vancouver, we have been monitoring Coho salmon through spawner and fry surveys. In the Little Campbell River, just a few metres from A Rocha Canada's field study centre, we are working to restore habitat as well. A recent project removed a collapsed culvert from a tributary, opening up significant over-wintering habitat for Coho salmon. At the study centre itself, we are in the midst of a wetland restoration project, which we hope will provide food sources and possibly habitat for young salmon. In doing so, A Rocha is caring not only for one species in God's creation, but also for all the species that benefit from its survival.



Surveying our world today, we can easily feel overwhelmed by the seemingly unstoppable destruction of the environment. News of deforestation, extinction of species, over-fishing, global warming, and the build-up of toxins in the very soil, plus forecasts of future catastrophe can cause us to wonder whether we can make any difference at all.

The Bible clearly shows that we each have a God-given responsibility towards the natural world, however. This book brings together a distinguished group of environmental and theological experts to examine the implications of the biblical teaching on the relationship between human creatures and creation. Interspersed are stories from around the world, drawn from the work of A Rocha, an international Christian organisation dedicated to environmental conservation, offering hope for the healing and transformation of the land.

Caring for Creation is edited by the Revd Sarah Tillett, who is a member of A Rocha and chaplain to the Church of England's Media Council Conference. She is also a trustee and director of Tearfund UK and based at a church in the West Midlands. Previously, she was a broadcaster and writer, living in Hong Kong.

'We are now faced with the crisis of climate change. My hope and prayer are that Christians will be found in the vanguard of those who influence public opinion and agitate for governmental action. To that end this book should make a significant contribution.'

FROM THE FOREWORD BY JOHN STOTT



All royalties from this book will go to the work of *A Rocha*



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