

Creation Dreams and Ecological Nightmares

by Brian J. Walsh

The contrasts are stark.

In the beginning the earth was a formless void,
I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void.

Let there be light,
and they had no light.

A lush, well watered world of rich fecundity,
the earth dries up and withers.

A world recognized as delightfully good,
all joy has reached its eventide,
the gladness of the earth is banished,
... the gladness of the earth is banished.

Creation dreams,
ecological nightmares.

A creation of rich interrelatedness and wholeness,
and yet, the earth is utterly broken,
the earth is torn asunder,
the earth is violently shaken.

The earth, the earth, the earth.

Waters swarming with living creatures,
and the fish of the sea are perishing.

Winged birds of every kind fly across the dome of the sky,
and the birds of the air are perishing.

And God blessed them and said ...
but a curse devours the earth.

A world of primordial peace,
and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

The contrasts are stark.

Biblical contrasts.
 Ecological contrasts.
 Dreams and nightmares.

Be fruitful and multiply,
 the birds of the air and the animals have fled and gone.

A flourishing creation,
 a languishing land.

Creatures of every kind,
 fewer and fewer creatures of any kind.

A generative world that brings forth life upon life,
 the degenerating force of a culture of death.

Fertile garden,
 barren wastelands.

A creatio per verbum,
 a creation by the Word of the Creator God,
 let there be, let there be
 let the waters bring forth,
 let the earth bring forth,
 in the beginning was the Word,
 all things came into being through this Word,
 a covenant word,
 a life engendering, calling, loving,
 inviting, directing, ordering
 Word of a Creator overflowing in creative love,
 an extravagant Word,
 a Word of blessing,

and yet,
 the earth lies polluted under its inhabitants;
 for they have transgressed laws,
 violated the statutes,
 broken the everlasting covenant,
 a broken Word.

The true Word of life
 meets the deceptive words of death.
 The contrasts are stark.

And God saw,
 God saw,

God saw,
 God saw,
 God saw,
 God saw,
 it was good,
 good,
 good,
 good,
 good,
 very good.

And I looked,
 I looked,
 I looked,
 I looked,
 I looked,
 it was waste and void,
 no light,
 mountains quaking,
 no one at all,
 no birds,
 no fruitfulness,
 cities in ruins.

God saw,
 it was good,
 I look,
 and see desolation.

Creational dreams,
 ecological nightmares.

Loving dominion
 degenerates into disdainful domination.

Creaturely kinship
 overthrown through human-centredness.

A rich diversity of many creatures 'according to their kinds'
 reduced to a world depleted of thousands upon thousands of species.

Seed bearing fruit and plants with their self-generating seed
 meet monocrop terminator seeds.

Wildly creative diversity
 nipped in the bud by industrial agriculture.

Selah

A creation dream that begins in silence,
 before that first creative word,
 drowned out by the cacophony
 of a world with too much communication
 and too little to say.

Counting on nothing,
 a *creatio ex nihilo*,
 a creation of pure gift
 meets a culture that counts only commodities,
 and entitlement renders gratitude impossible.

An ecstatic creation dream,
 a dream of energy “sparks the wind from your hair,”
 engendering “fields of motion surging outward”
 meets the ecological nightmare of consumer affluence
 fueled by oil fields and tar sands,
 firing the engines of progress.

Creation dream degenerates into a dark dream.

A dream of an eloquent creation,
 a responsive world wherein
 questions contain their own replies
 gives way to a world of mute objects,
 natural resources,
 commodities.

You were dancing,
 I saw you dancing
 throwing your arms toward the sky.
 Not just a *creatio per verbum*,
 not just a creation by powerful Word,
 but a *creatio per salutum*
 a creation by dance.

Fingers opening,
 like flares
 stars were shooting everywhere

lines of power
 bursting outward
 along the channels of your song.
 Like Aslan singing Narnia into being,
 here is a dream of creation
 through a song so beautiful that you could hardly bear it.

From *creatio per verbum*,
 creation by the word;
 to *creatio per salatum*,
 creation through dance;
 to *creatio per cantum*,
 creation through song.

And song calls forth song.
 Creation sings,
 trees clap their hands,
 hills dance for joy,
 the storm clouds praise,
 birds and animals sing in the choir,
 even the rocks on the side of the road will cry out!

And the image-bearer can't help herself,
 she too must sing.
 Lord of the starfields
 Ancient of Days
 Universe Maker
 Here's a song in your praise

 Wings of the storm cloud
 beginning and end
 you make my heart leap
 like a banner in the wind

A liberated imagination begins in praise.
 Blessed care of our creaturely neighbours
 begins in gratitude borne of love,
 love at the very heart of creation.

 O Love that fires the sun
 keep me burning.

May my love,
 may that which animates my life,

may that passion and liberated imagination
 be rooted in nothing less than the very love
 that fires the sun,
 nothing less than the very animating Spirit
 that is the real driving force of all of life.

Lord of the starfields,
 sower of life
 heaven and earth are
 full of your light.

May our praise not descend into blasphemy,
 may we not be sowers of death,
 may we not block out the light that illuminates heaven and earth,
 may we live in the light
 and say to the darkness, 'we beg to differ.'

The light shines in the darkness,
 and the darkness did not overcome it.

Voice of the Nova
 smile of the dew
 all of our yearning
 only comes home to you.

Deafening voice of a super nova,
 the powerful, commanding voice of the Creator's
 creation-calling Word,
 that is as gentle and as inviting
 as the smile of the morning dew.

In the face of habitat destruction
 we long for restoration,
 in the face of species eradication
 we long for care,
 in the face of global warming,
 we long for repentance,
 in the face of economic captivity,
 we long for ecological liberation,
 in the face of our broken hearts in a broken world
 we confess that our hearts are restless
 until they find their rest in Thee,

all of our yearning,
only comes home to you.

One day I walk in flowers,
one day I walk on stones,
today I walk in hours,
one day I shall be home.

Coming home,
ecological rape meets stewardly love.

Coming home,
that which is despoiled is made whole.

Coming home,
defilement meets forgiveness and restoration.

Coming home,
every tear is wiped away.

Coming home,
ecological vandals become homemakers.

Coming home,
home to the Father,
home to the family,
home to the community,
home to the earth.

Home was born with shots of silver
in the shell-pink dawn.
Home was born in a garden.

Home is born anew in another garden,
another dawn,
the resurrection dawn of the new creation.

What once was estranged is reconciled,
what once was hostile is befriended,
what once was defiled is holy,
what once was guilty is blameless.

This is the gospel,
this is the good news,
this is the faith,

this is the hope.

Anything less,
 and we remain homeless.
 Anything less,
 the rape continues.
 Anything less,
 our piety is blasphemy.
 Anything less,
 Jesus is still on the cross.

Reconciliation of all things,
 in heaven and on earth,
 visible and invisible,
 all things created,
 all things redeemed,
 all things brought back home.

Two thousand years and half a world away,
 dieing trees still will grow greener
 when you pray.

This is the gospel,
 not just for humans,
 not just for "our sins"
 not just for "our souls."

This is the gospel,
 proclaimed to every creature under heaven.
 This is the gospel grasped by atoms and amoeba,
 good news for habitats and House Wrens,
 restoration for eagles and ecozones,
 salvation for seed-bearing plants and seas swarming with life.

All this glory shining around
 and we're all caught taking a dive,
 and all the beasts of the hills around shout,
 "such a waste!
 don't you know that from the first to the last
 we're all one in the gift of Grace!"

The beasts of the hills know,
 the winds and rains know,
 the fish of the sea and birds of the air know,

the fruit trees and vegetation know,
 all of creation knows
 that the dawn has come.

All of creation knows
 that homecoming is at hand.

All of creation knows
 that the one who dies for the world
 has exercised the true dominion.

All creation knows
 that the tomb is empty.

All creation knows
 that the New Adam has risen with healing in his hands.

All of creation knows
 that we're one in the gift of Grace.

All of creation proclaims,
 "Alleluia! Christ is risen!"

O love, that fires the sun,
 keep me burning.

O love, that is the heart of all things,
 set our imaginations free.

Creation dreams or ecological nightmares.
 Life or death.
 Blessing or curse.

Without vision there are nightmares.
 Without dreams there is death.

So choose life,
 live out of a creation dream,
 practice resurrection.