

Editorial: Creation Waits with Eager Longing

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On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing eleven workers and sinking, two days later, into the Gulf of Mexico. Since then, “the spill has gushed up to 100,000 gallons of oil a day into the Gulf.”¹ As if previous environmental issues were not enough, this spill—what President Obama called “the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced,”²—has made it possible once again to almost *feel and hear the earth’s groaning*, as the Apostle Paul so aptly put it, as it waits “with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19), when “creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21).

Likewise, Paul says, *humanity also groans* as men and women, young and old (Rom. 8:23) await their final redemption. Pentecostals are famous for heeding the call to alleviate that groaning, going to the “ends of the earth” in their ministry endeavors and, by the power of the Spirit, bringing the good news of salvation through Christ to a lost world.

But what if going to the “ends of the earth” also includes a stop at the local recycling center to drop off paper, plastic, and aluminum instead of shipping it all off to a landfill? Is that, too, a part of our responsibility in representing fairly, Christ’s Kingdom on earth?

Christopher Wright thinks so. In his lectures presented at the spring 2010 lectureship series at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (included in this issue of *Encounter*), Wright beautifully weaves creation care into his message of “The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World”—a case he more fully presents in his book, *The Mission of God*.³ There he lays out an excellent case for environmental stewardship—based neither on alignment with political and cultural trends nor even on obvious current environmental crises, but rather on the fundamental idea that *the earth is the Lord’s* (Ps. 24:1).⁴ He made it (Gen. 1:1), designated humans to serve as caretakers of it (v. 28), provided its beauty as a way of showing His glory (Rom. 1:20), and will ultimately redeem the earth itself just as He will redeem those who have put their trust in Him (8:18-25).

Since the earth is the Lord’s, “saving” it, then, entails not only pouring ourselves out as Christ-followers for the holistic salvation of the earth’s human inhabitants, but also considering what role caring for the created order plays in the future redemption of *all creation*.

Many of the lectures, feature articles, ministry reflections, and book reviews in this issue of *Encounter* consider this *holistic* nature of God’s mission on the planet and

discuss what is needed to empower Pentecostal leaders to meet the needs of *all* creation waiting anxiously for its redemption. Ivan Satyavrata, in his fall 2009 Hogan lectures at AGTS (included in this issue), calls the Church to understand the significant trends of globalization and set its mission priorities accordingly:

In addition to poverty, globalization has also brought with it various other threats to human life. It has increased the risk of infectious illnesses and epidemics, HIV-AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Human life is also endangered by human trafficking, cross-border terrorism, and environmental disasters due to humanly-engineered ecological imbalance. Latin American evangelical leader Samuel Escobar draws attention to the growing recognition among responsible evangelicals of the importance of the social component in mission before declaring “in the coming century, Christian compassion will be the only hope of survival for victims of the global economic process.”⁵

In addition to the lectureship series, this issue of *Encounter* also addresses such holistic themes as the Pentecostal Church’s growing social conscience (K. Duncan), racial reconciliation (T. Roberts, S. Polk), human trafficking (S. Rodriguez), and women’s issues (J. Detrick, V. Judd)—each piece uniquely equipping believers to participate in the mission of God with all spiritual empowerment. That mission, carried out in the global arena, must point people to the presence of God (C. Self), be founded on sound biblical principles (Rosen, Morrison, Musy), and utilize innovative ministry methods (D. Detrick) if the Church is to see transformational change (Silverii) take place in *all* flesh.

It would seem, then, wouldn’t it, that being a believer—and a Pentecostal leader—in the twenty-first century entails, plain and simple—loving God enough to care enough to do enough ... as all creation waits.

Further Resources on Creation Care:
“[AGTS is ‘Going Green.’](http://www.agts.edu/community/recycling.html)”

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¹Aliyah Shahid, “BP’s Containment Cap Replaced on Gushing Oil Well in Gulf after Deepwater Horizon Rig Explosion,” *NYDailyNews.com* (June 24, 2010), http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2010/06/24/2010-06-24_bps_containment_cap_replaced_on_gushing_oil_well_in_gulf_after_deepwater_horizon.html (accessed June 30, 2010). See also, “Gulf Oil Spill: How Much Oil Has Leaked into the Gulf of Mexico?” *The Huffington Post*, May 25, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/25/gulf-oil-spill-how-much-o_n_588587.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

²CNN Wire Staff, “Obama Details Oil Spill Response, Calls for Energy Reform,” CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/06/15/obama.speech/index.html?hpt=T1> (accessed June 30, 2010). As terrible as the spill is, whether or not this is America’s “worst” environmental disaster is debatable: “Worst Disaster? Depends on Your View of History,” Cleveland.com, http://www.cleveland.com/nation/index.ssf/2010/06/worst_disaster_depends_on_your.html#modg_smoref_fa (accessed June 30, 2010).

³Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006). (See specifically chapter 12, “Mission and God’s Earth.”)

⁴See also Exod. 9:29, 19:5; Deut. 10:14; 1 Sam. 2:8; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12; 89:11; and 1 Cor. 10:26.

⁵Ivan Satyavrata, “J. Philip Hogan’s Spirit-Led Vision and the Globalization of Pentecostal Missions in the Twenty-First Century” (Inaugural Lecture presented at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, September 16, 2009) *Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry*, 7 (July 2010), <http://www.agts.edu/encounter/articles/2010summer/satyavrata1.pdf>, 12. Escobar quote in Satyavrata, from: William D. Taylor, ed. *Global Missiology for the Twenty-first Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 33.