

Norman C. Habel, David Rhoads, and H. Paul Santmire, eds. *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011. 234 pages. \$35.

This collection of essays aims to make preachers more aware of a Christian's relationship and responsibility to creation by reflecting on appropriate texts of Scripture. The editors advocate including a new season in the three-year lectionary cycle that focuses on creation as a part of the liturgical calendar. This season was initiated by Norman Habel in Australia and is easily adapted for North American usage. The Season of Creation is observed each year in September and follows the lectionary cycle with the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke so that the creation season does not break from the gospel core but enhances and deepens it. The editors connect the four Sundays of the creation season with specific domains of God's work of creation: Forest Sunday, Ocean Sunday, Earth Sunday, River Sunday, Wilderness Sunday, etc. These domains can vary depending on the part of the world in which one lives.

The editors appropriately desire to integrate our relationship with creation into a worship context and mentality that has focused primarily on the worshipper's relationship to God and other humans. Their desire would be not just to have a season of creation but insinuate that creation theology should be incorporated into every phase of the church year. They correctly understand the ecological crisis not just as an environmental issue but also a spiritual one.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One deals with the nuts and bolts of the Season of Creation. This includes an explanation of its make-up, a theology of liturgy, and a hermeneutic for reading texts related to creation. The largest section of the book, Part Two, is an expository type of commentary on the four texts related to each of the twelve Sundays in the three-year cycle. In total, twelve different scholars provide brief commentary on forty-eight different texts. The scholars emphasize throughout the commentary that God's reconciliation is not just for humans, but for all creation (Col 1:20; Mark 16:15).

The contributors offer provocative insights as they highlight particular creation themes in the texts. On Humanity Sunday, for example, Norman Habel argues that the two different creation accounts in Genesis represent distinct traditions. One tradition maintains that humans rule (Gen 1:26-28). The other maintains that humans serve and preserve (Gen 2:15). He asserts these two traditions should not be harmonized but must remain in conflict with one another. The gospel (Mark 10:41-45) and epistle (Phil 2:1-8) readings for this particular Sunday reinterpret Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, making it clear humans are called to serve and not rule.

As another example, for the gospel text on Ocean Sunday (Luke 5:1-11), Jione Havea criticizes the disciples as fishermen because of their greed. When their nets were beginning to break and their boats sinking because of the abundant catch, they should have released some of the fish. The disciples were guilty of abusing nature. Christians are called on to honor the wealth and riches of our large bodies of water, which is contrary to the action of the disciples on this occasion. Perspectives such as these will cause some to whole-heartedly agree and others to vehemently dispute. Because of that, this volume will generate thought-provoking reflection and as a result raise more awareness of our relationship and responsibility to creation.

The representative texts chosen for the twelve Sundays are, for the most part, valid choices. Some of the more obvious choices are repeated on several occasions. For example, the creation account in Genesis is used three times. The conclusion of Job is used twice. Psalm 139 is used twice and Psalm 104 three times. This repetition is not necessarily bad. The problem, however, is that a few really important Old Testament texts are omitted. Notably absent are the prophetic eschatological visions like Isa 11:6-9 and Amos 9:13-15.

The health of this planet is at a critical point in our day and time. Creation groans and, as partners with creation, humans also groan. Awareness and responsible action must be taken in order to serve and preserve creation. The first step may very well be to reorient Christian thought and to instill in the church a renewed appreciation of a creation whose existence and destiny is intimately bound up with our own. Norman Habel and contributors provide an important resource for preachers in leading their faith communities forward in making that happen.

Dave Bland, Harding School of Theology, Memphis, TN