



Attending to Creation

Both theological and practical issues arise in connection with the doctrine of creation. The doctrine has to do not only with reflection on the origins of the cosmos, but also with our understanding of God, the continuing creative activity of God (*creatio continua*) who “gives life to all things” and “richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:13, 17), and the role of Christ in creation, in whom “all things were created” and “all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17). The doctrine of creation touches upon origins, preservation, the trinitarian character of God, Christology, and new creation.

The doctrine has implications for our worship, our understanding of the relationship between people, our stewardship, and our approach to church and society issues. It has obvious bearing on issues in science and religion, public and religious education, and environmental protection. The doctrine of creation is too often simply assumed—as tending only to the “background” or “stage setting” of the story of Israel, Christ, and the church—and therefore it is given insufficient attention. This issue of the journal provides a portion of the attention due it.

We begin with an essay by *Robert Jastrow*. He sums up modern developments in astronomy which lead to the conclusion that the universe had a beginning some 20 billion years ago, raises the question of a supernatural cause, speaks of the “religion of science” (or of the scientific community), and describes the emotions, commitments, and reactions of astronomers to what their own findings present. *Gustaf Wingren* provides an account of why the doctrine of creation has been neglected in modern theology, calls for a “renaissance of the first article” of the creed, tells why that is important, and leads us into the works of Irenaeus and Luther as a way to help appropriate a biblically based and ecumenical understanding of the doctrine of creation. *Ted Peters* sums up contemporary scientific cosmology and then goes on to science-and-religion issues, giving critique to attempts at correlation which he considers inappropriate, and providing an approach which he considers fitting. *Margaret Hammer* offers a theological perspective on “birthing”; she draws not only on classical sources

(Scripture, Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard), but also from the writings and experiences of women, and she offers suggestions for the ministry of the church to persons and couples going through the process—a time for new life and renewal. *Dennis Ormseth* reviews major reactions to Darwin in theology and science in the 19th and 20th centuries (giving special attention to Karl Barth) and suggests resources for use in contemporary public debate. *Paul Santmire* discusses the future of the cosmos in light of the theology of hope, showing ways that this theological perspective can help the church “renew its life with nature in this era of growing cosmic alienation.” He suggests ways of thinking about salvation and consummation which, taken

seriously, have a bearing on the mission of the church. *Gerald Barney* provides a concise assessment of the current state of the world's resources, the earth's "carrying capacity," and the consequences of nuclear warfare; he also sets out what must be taken into account if theology is to provide a new vision "to replace the vision that has failed."

The Resources section contains an essay by *Lester Meyer* on Luther's treatment of Genesis 1-3. He summarizes some of the themes to which Luther gave attention (human nature, the relationship between men and women, the character of sin, etc.) and the ways in which Luther interpreted this portion of Scripture. Finally, *Robert Albers* has written the Texts in Context essay, giving attention to those parables in Matthew's Gospel which are assigned in the lectionary for the latter part of the current church year.

Subsequent issues of this journal will be under the editorial supervision of others. The Editor and Book Editor have been granted sabbaticals for the current academic year. The Associate Editor, Dennis Ormseth, will be Acting Editor, and Stanley Olson will be Book Editor. To fill the vacancy of Associate Editor, David Tiede has been called upon once again to serve in that capacity. On the basis of the planning and the high competencies these persons bring to their respective tasks, the journal will continue to provide stimulating and helpful leadership in the doing of "theology for Christian ministry."

A.J.H.