

MAGAZINE

FOCUS

'Our house
is on fire!'

SKOLSTREJK
FÖR
KLIMATET

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Front cover picture: Teenager Greta Thunberg with a placard that reads, 'School strike for the climate'.

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From discussion to emergency?

To put it mildly, the people who thought the world was going to end soon were at one time considered to be a little off beam, fanatics even. Most respectable thinking people were advised to have little to do with them. And then, at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, along comes 16-year-old Greta Thunberg declaring, 'Our house is on fire', dramatically changing the mood music of climate change from 'discussion' to 'emergency'.

It's more than likely that the reason you're taking a browse through *Focus* is because it was handed to you by a Seventh-day Adventist. Hands up! We're the people who for quite a while have been saying that Planet Earth is in trouble, and humanity needs to take notice. We say this because, along with many fellow Christians, we continue to trust the Bible's ancient words, which offer God and His ways of doing things as a solution for the state we're in.

Let me explain by unpacking the name 'Seventh-day Adventist', which looks both backwards and forwards simultaneously.

'Seventh-day' indicates a respect for the biblical record of creation as recorded in Genesis. Creation care is so important to us that we continue to keep the biblical Seventh-day Sabbath special, to celebrate God creating our world 'just right'.

'Adventist' is a statement of hope that the Christ who once entered our world 2,000 years ago will return a second time at some unknown time in the future. Unlike the man who used to stand gloomily in the high street with the 'The End is Nigh' sandwich board, Seventh-day Adventists are hopeful, joyful, cheerful people, enthusiastically optimistic about the future. We are a people with an expectancy that the God who created this world will one day recreate it: not somewhere in outer space (often called heaven), but eventually right where you and I live. The added bonus is that He offers to recreate us too.

In the meantime, we take the view that all of us, every citizen on Planet Earth, is responsible for looking after, managing, and respecting our beautifully created world. If you think this might seem contradictory, C. S. Lewis understood it well when he said in his book, *Mere Christianity*: 'If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.'

Focus is also inclined to agree with Greta Thunberg's assessment that 'our house is on fire'. The 'paralysis of analysis' days are over, and action is urgently required. Sure, governments and corporations must act, but we know that they won't do so until we act. Our hope is that this edition of *Focus* will not only give you a Christian perspective on the crisis, but some practical ways of personally making a difference. All of us are on a journey, but make no mistake, without doubt, on this matter we need to move much, much faster.



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What have we done?

by David L. Wright



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It's been said that the environmental movement began in the 1960s when Rachel Carson published her influential book, *Silent Spring*. In it she warned that the world at that time 'stood where two roads diverged'. One road, which we had been travelling along at great speed for so long, would end in ecological disaster, while the other 'less travelled' one offered the last chance to reach a destination that assured the preservation of the earth.¹ Since then, despite huge efforts by many people and organisations worldwide to change their lifestyle and reduce their personal impact, our planet seems to be under greater danger of environmental disaster than ever before, with the number of threats having grown, rather than lessened.

The 2018 Earth Day event to demonstrate support for environmental protection listed the most pressing environmental concerns currently facing our planet as ocean plastics, rising sea levels, extreme weather, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, climate refugees,

famine and food scarcity, water supply, climate-related illnesses and wildfires. It pointed out that over half of these are due to global warming, all are interconnected, and all are caused by human activity.

So, what on earth has caused these problems, and is there anything we can do about them?

Christians believe that, when He created our planet, 'God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good' (Genesis 1:31, NKJV). According to Professor

Calvin deWitt at Wisconsin University, God originally designed our world with seven interdependent systems on which all creatures and human life depend.² Celebrated in Psalm 104, these seven provisions, 'indicative of the remarkable integrity and beauty that have engendered awe, wonder and respect for the Creator and creation throughout the ages', are:

1. The regulation of Planet Earth's energy exchange with the sun, designed to keep Earth's temperature at a level supportive of life, protecting life from the sun's radiation by filtering sunlight through the ozone layer;
2. Bio-geological and soil-building processes which cycle oxygen, carbon, water and other vital materials through living things and their habitats and build life-supporting soils and soil structure;
3. Ecosystem energy transfer and materials recycling, which energises life and continually allocates life-sustaining resources;



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4. Water purification systems which distil, filter and purify surface and ground waters;
5. The biological and ecological ‘fruitfulness’ which supports and maintains the rich biodiversity of life on Earth.
6. The global circulation of water and air, which distributes water, oxygen, carbon dioxide and other vital materials between living systems across the planet;
7. The human ability to learn from creation and live within its laws, making it possible for people to live sustainably on Earth, and so safeguard the creation.

DeWitt then suggests that an analysis of all the available scientific literature paints a picture of Earth’s relentless destruction over time as ‘seven degradations of creation’:

1. The alteration of Earth’s energy exchange with the sun, resulting in accelerated global warming and the destruction of Earth’s protective ozone layer;
2. Land degradation that has destroyed both land and soil by erosion, salinisation and desertification, thereby reducing areas for creatures and crops;
3. Deforestation and over-use, which have removed most of our primary forest, despite it being

vital for oxygen production and carbon capture;

4. Species extinction, which eliminates between 150 and 200 plant and animal species from our planet daily;
5. Water quality degradation, resulting from pollution of groundwater, lakes, rivers and oceans;
6. Waste generation and global toxification, which results from atmospheric and oceanic circulation of the materials that people inject into the air and water – such as chemicals and plastics;
7. Human and cultural degradation, which threatens and eliminates human communities that have lived sustainably and cooperatively with creation, resulting in the loss of longstanding food varieties.

Last year, the *New York Times* reported that, as the effects of global warming and other environmental threats are no longer theoretical, a significant number of couples in the 18-40 age group have decided against having children, because ‘**it was not an easy time to feel hopeful**’.³ Another article by opinion writer Damon Winter revealed that he cried twice when his daughter was born: first with joy when she arrived, but second when he realised ‘**that he could see no way to shield her from the future**’ – a ‘**world of extinction and catastrophe**’. Winter went on to say that



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anyone paying attention to climate change knows the outlook is grim. **‘It’s not unreasonable to say that the challenge we face today is the greatest the human species has ever confronted. And anyone who pays much attention to politics can assume we’re almost certainly going to botch it. The very idea of unified national political action towards a single goal seems farcical, and unified action on a global scale mere whimsy.**’⁴ Leading ecologist, Barry Commoner, Director of the Centre for Biology of Natural Systems, who warned against the environmental threats posed by technology such as nuclear power, pesticides, detergents and other toxic chemicals, wrote something similar in the sixties. **‘It appears, on present showing at any rate, quite out of the question that, in a permissive age, [we] can find unaided, sufficient self-constraint to achieve what is necessary for [our] survival. There is no possibility of such huge changes in personal, national and international orientation taking place except under the compulsion of strong religious conviction.**’⁵

Perhaps we should not be surprised that the environmental threats we face today all appear to be linked in some way with human choices and behaviour. Ancient writings two to three millennia ago record numerous prophetic warnings that relate human conduct with ecological imbalance, challenging us to see human conduct and the world as God must see them. The Old Testament writer Jeremiah reported: **‘I looked at the earth – it was a barren waste; . . . I saw that there were no people; even the birds had flown away. The fertile land had become a desert; its cities were in ruins . . .’** (Jeremiah 4:23, 25, 26, GNB). Isaiah saw something similar: **‘The earth dries up and withers; the whole world grows weak; both earth and sky decay. The people have defiled the earth by breaking God’s laws’** (Isaiah 24:4, 5, GNB). Christians believe that the Bible teaches that God gave us control and stewardship of the natural world, and that we are responsible for taking care of it. It seems that, at its core, the current environmental crisis on Planet Earth is

essentially a moral and spiritual issue, suggesting that environmental awareness can only have real meaning if there is real purpose in the existence and future of our world.

One of the most influential books to be written in the past 40 years, titled *How to Save the World*, was based on the first major World Conservation Strategy, prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Wildlife Fund, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.⁶ It set out to explain why the

world needed saving and how it could be done; but, sadly,

it made no mention of the God who made it. Yet the New Testament book of Acts clearly says that future salvation can only be found through God's Son, Jesus: **'In all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us'** (Acts 4:12, GNB).

What can we do?

Despite the enormity of the environmental problems we face, there are still many things we can do that can help make a difference. John Lennon used to quote the founder of the Friends of the Earth, David Bower, by telling everyone they should **'think globally; act locally'**, while Mahatma Gandhi used to say that we should **'live simply so that others may simply live'**. To achieve this at an individual level we could try to:

- Eat more sustainably – by moving away from a meat- and dairy-dominated diet to a more plant-based one, and even growing our own.
- Reduce our overall consumption – by donating or selling things we no longer need; mending, repairing or repurposing things so they can be used longer; cherishing old

things; and borrowing or buying second-hand, rather than new.

- Recycle more – the most effective way to lessen landfill waste, conserve natural resources, save habitats, reduce pollution, and slow global warming.
- Reduce our energy consumption – by unplugging appliances and turning off lights when not in use, switching our energy provider to one that obtains energy from low-carbon or renewable resources, turning the thermostat down and wearing warmer clothes, using eco-friendly light bulbs, and setting cooler clothes-wash temperatures.
- Reduce food waste – by shopping more carefully, using leftovers and composting more.
- Make transportation changes – by leaving the car at home, walking, cycling or using public transport more, making our next vehicle a hybrid, and car sharing.
- Keep an eye on water usage – by drinking tap water instead of bottled, turning off the tap when brushing teeth, getting leaky pipes and taps fixed, setting shower time limits, using dishwashers and washing machines only when fully loaded (or, better still, hand-washing), and watering outdoor plants and gardens with grey water.
- Reduce packaging – by shopping with reusable bags or bagging things ourselves.
- Eat locally – by purchasing or consuming food produced closer to home and requiring less transport and packaging.

- Use money more wisely – by moving money to banks or financial organisations that invest in ethical, low-carbon industries, and always 'green purchasing' when online or at the supermarket.
- Love our neighbour as ourselves – by sharing errands, lending tools, and buying in bulk (in fact, just this one action alone would pretty much change most of what we do in the environmental sphere – for example, eliminating litter overnight!).
- Calculate our own personal global footprint – by completing one of the many online carbon or biocapacity footprint calculators available from, for example, the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy or the Global Footprint Network. This will tell you the environmental impact that your own personal lifestyle makes on our shared world. Currently, if everyone in the world consumed as much as the average UK citizen, we would need 2.4 earths to live.

¹*Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson, 1962 ²*The Care of Creation*, Calvin deWitt, 2000 ³*New York Times*, 5/2/18 ⁴*New York Times*, 16/7/18 ⁵*Science and Survival*, Barry Commoner, 1966 ⁶*How to Save the World*, Robert Allen, 1980



Just a load of old cardboard ... ?

Prince is aged 28 and is fascinated by gardening and everything that grows in the ground. If you ask me, that's not quite the most usual activity for your average 28-year-old Grantham,

Lincolnshire male. But, sure enough, Prince

is interested not only in growing food in his garden, but in building an 'ecosystem'.

'Hold it right there,' I suggest, as we begin our conversation together. I thought this was going to be simply an interesting conversation about a millennial experimenting in how to grow some home-grown food without chemical fertiliser. But building an ecosystem?

Prince explains that at the core of his gardening experiment is the process of natural composting, which builds an ecosystem in a way that is self-sustaining. It is managed, but shouldn't require much to keep it going.

It all sounds like a good idea, but what is the harm in visiting the local garden centre and picking up a bag of compost? Prince responds by describing what he's trying to do as a form of permanent agriculture, or 'permaculture'. 'This is not just about an ideal,' he says, 'but about the vital science of the land renewing itself with the energy and nutrients required for plants to grow.' He explains that leaves which fall from the trees, old, dead plants at the end of the season, grass cuttings, and other garden detritus all go into the compost box. Critically, he emphasises, 'All those sources need to be as close to you as possible.'

Prince works for the Stanborough Press, the publisher of *Focus* magazine, and we both work in the same building. As Prince left for home one evening I noticed that he was packing several flattened cardboard boxes left over from our book deliveries. 'Are you moving house?' I asked.

'No,' he replied. 'I'm taking these boxes to my garden, and will cover the ground with them. The purpose of the cardboard layer is to create a barrier, a covering for the ground.'

Still a bit puzzled, I responded, quite bemused, with, '... and?'

And then Prince shared something that I had just never realised until that moment: 'Nature will always cover itself with something.'

Prince explains how he uses the cardboard as a barrier to limit the extremes of hot and cold in the soil. He also illustrates this principle by showing me an apple. As he peels the apple in his hand, he asks me how long it will take to deteriorate.

'I guess that in about 15 minutes it will start to turn brown,' I reply. 'Exactly, and that's my point,' continues Prince. 'Nature, left to itself, will put a skin on itself, giving itself a sort of membrane.'

Since Prince shared that principle, I've been thinking about it a lot. It's really quite obvious, isn't it? The trees in the wooded area near where I live drop leaves each autumn, which fall to the ground and lie there. The covering decays and turns into a nutrient for the next growing season, or the season after, depending on the speed of the decay/rotting process.

On the macro level, Prince uses the example of the Amazon Rainforest to reinforce the point.

'You see it so consistently anywhere in the world. Nature follows principles and laws. We work so hard to achieve a suboptimal result. Take the Amazon, for example – who looks after it? And yet it is the lungs of the world, one of the biggest gardens on the planet, and nobody looks after it. Whoever did this is very clever.'

Prince simulates this process in his garden by creating a portion to grow produce. His pattern is to lay the cardboard first, recreating the covering that the ground likes to have. It's a foundation. Then, on top of this, he lays a thick layer of mulch (grass cuttings, leaves, wood chips, or compost).

As I delve a little deeper into Prince's reason for what I think is best described as eco-horticulture, I discover that he was raised in the centre of a city with his younger sister. Fortunately, the property was just big enough to provide limited garden space for what we'd call an allotment. The children were taught by Dad and Mum from an early age to connect with the ground. 'Growing things' was the norm. Since their family originates from Zambia, the most popular crop was maize.

Of course, it should be no surprise that Prince continues to grow maize in his Grantham garden. As he reveals that it's been a long family tradition to eat 'home-grown' maize, I warm to this Zambia-Grantham connection. The same plant can be grown in both Lusaka and Lincolnshire, a hemisphere away from each other.

Amazed, I ask, 'What else do you grow in your garden, Prince?'

'In our raised bed area, cabbage and potatoes are the major vegetables.' For a brief moment he smiles wistfully.



'Nature will always cover itself with something.'

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'What's amusing you?' I ask.

'I was just remembering the land in Zambia. It would be great to grow groundnuts and peanuts here.'

Prince was brought up as a Christian, and continues to live by Christian values. He reckons his eco-horticulture gives him an incredible appreciation of God as Creator, who he believes put all this together in the first place. He points to the grass, trees and bushes outside my office window where we are talking together. 'As a gardener, I'm just copying what He did,' he says with a sort of excited confidence.

Now I understand what he said earlier: *'Whoever did this is very clever.'*

'You're suggesting, then, that behind the way nature works there is an intelligent design to it all, or even an intelligent Designer?' I respond.

'The sign of intelligence is pattern. Whenever we see a pattern of any kind, we recognise intelligence. When we stop to look at the natural systems, there are patterns and cycles.'

'Mankind has the ability to simulate the cycles. We can mimic, to a point (for example, a greenhouse simulates what happens on a large scale with the atmosphere).'

'I'm beginning to understand it,' I say.

Prince continues, 'Man's influence, sorry to

say, is typically bad. We insist on refusing to follow the principles that are currently at play. Take the 'covering' principle for example. We scrape off the greenery and leave the brown stuff exposed. We take the covering off, and then wonder why the plants aren't doing as well. We put additives and fertilisers into the ground and over-stretch the land, exhausting it. In ancient times, they left the land fallow every seventh year (Leviticus 25:1-7, 18-22).'

With our time together almost up, Prince's enthusiasm and respect for the small plot of land he looks after inspires me. I see someone who is a great 'land manager', respectfully permitting the land to do what it was designed to do: re-generate itself. That's quite something, and requires a lot of trust. If I've seen it once, I've seen it a hundred times, but Prince's commitment to eco-horticulture reminds me of a couple of lines from an age-old poem that on the surface looks a little sentimental. Dig deeper and the sentiment could have more to it than we often think.

*'One is nearer God's Heart in a garden Than anywhere else on Earth.'*¹

Prince certainly thinks so.

¹'God's Garden', lines 13-16, *Poems*, by Dorothy Frances Gurney (London: Country Life, 1913)

We're on a journey

Meet the staff of the Stanborough Press, the publisher of *Focus* magazine, based on the very edge of Grantham, Lincolnshire. Whenever anyone writes or speaks about the environment comes the legitimate response, 'Do you practise what you preach?'

Like us all, the Stanborough Press management and staff are on a journey. Together we compiled a list of all the practical day-to-day things we do to ensure that our 'consumption' is sustainable. If any of the things we do inspires you to do the same, it can only help the big picture.

Travel

- Drive a low-emission car.
- Walk to work.
- Cycle to work.

Grocery purchases

- Buy organic produce.
- Buy fair-trade products.
- Buy, as far as possible, home-grown fruit and vegetables.

Home and garden

- Limit toilet flushes.
- Shower rather than bathe.
- Wash hair with shampoo made from recycled milk containers.
- Trap small items of food waste with a sink strainer.
- Upgrade lighting to LEDs.
- Switch off lights in empty rooms.
- Use eco-friendly cleaning products.
- Wash on low temperatures.
- Ensure the house is well insulated.
- Recycle packaging as much as possible.

Garden

- Grow organic food.
- Grow flowers to support bee pollination.
- Use a garden composter or green bin.

Electronics

- Confession: we like our gadgets and have some work to do on this. We calculate that on average the age of our mobile phones is 2.37 years. Congrats to one of our employees, whose phone is 6 years old!

Stanborough Press

- Upgraded most of its lighting to LEDs.
- Uses biomass boilers for heating.

We're on a journey. However, we realise that as time has moved on from 'climate change' to 'climate emergency', we need to use less of more.



I am a three-shape shifter.

I'm hard as stone, or softer than silk, or light as air.

Though legless, I can run: but only in one direction.

Without me you will die, but I rejuvenate myself.

Most people spend a lot of their time thinking. I can spend hours doing nothing else! Reading this short article

components. These brains are about 73% water, our lungs are about 83% water, our muscles are about 79% water and our skin

may set you thinking! Our mysterious minds, and the varied ideas, dreams and emotions that occupy them, are dependent on material brains and their biological

contains about 64% water. Overall, water makes up about 60% of our bodies. Water, humdrum water, is the most essential resource we need: not only for thinking, but for every aspect of our existence! Water is colourless. It has no tempting aroma. It's tasteless too, so there's no outward glamour to hint at its starring role.

Uniqueness of water

But water is extraordinary and unique in many ways.¹ H₂O molecules are made from two hydrogen atoms attached to a central oxygen atom. This arrangement enables each water molecule to form hydrogen bonds with up to four other water molecules. In the liquid, these hydrogen bonds hold the molecules together in strings and clusters, thereby creating three-dimensional networks extending everywhere internally and to all surfaces. Water is the only substance able to form such an internal structure. These networks impart a

host of special properties that make water amazingly fit to support life.

Water is pivotal in the environment

Water's hydrogen-bonding networks impart an inner cohesiveness that gives rise to its exceptional thermal properties. Water's practically unique ability to co-exist at environmental temperatures as ice, liquid and vapour stems from this, as does its exceptional ability to retain heat. These are the properties that make water the most essential resource in the environment. They make possible the grand global system that is the water cycle. In this cycle, liquid evaporates from the ocean, condenses in clouds, precipitates as rain, infiltrates soil and rocks, and then distributes minerals and nutrients worldwide before running back to the ocean. Probably the earliest understanding of this is found in the Bible. The book of Job, widely regarded as the first written book of the Old Testament, explains that:

'He draws up the drops of water, which distil as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind.' Job 36:27, 28, NIV-UK.

During evaporation water spontaneously frees itself from pollutants and rejuvenates, thus replenishing the continents with fresh water. This self-perpetuating distribution of water,

Love water; love life

by John Walton

minerals and nutrients maintains and refreshes the geo- and bio-spheres on a worldwide scale. During evaporation the water takes up energy from its surroundings and cools the environment. When it condenses, energy is released that warms the environment. These processes are hugely important in moderating global climate and in maintaining temperatures year-round within a range suitable for life.

Water is an exceptionally good solvent because it is highly polar and hooks in many substances by hydrogen bonds. Almost all inorganic compounds dissolve in water to some extent, and many organics do too. This is one reason why it is so good at transporting and delivering minerals and nutrients in the environment.

The elixir of life

Water's dissolving power, plus its exceptional fluidity, makes it the ideal medium for the circulatory systems of all air-breathing organisms: including us. In respiration, water and oxygen play essential parts in the conversion of nutrients to useful energy. Most substances quickly react with oxygen, but fortunately water does not: so oxygen and its haemoglobin carriers can safely dissolve in water and circulate to the sites of energy production in living cells.

Nevertheless, water isn't simply a passive medium, because it actively participates in numerous cellular metabolic processes. When oxygen breaks down nutrients, water is produced, along with carbon dioxide and energy. The carbon dioxide directly combines with water to generate carbonic acid. This weak acid spontaneously dissociates to bicarbonate ions and hydrogen ions. The aqueous circulatory system transports the bicarbonate ions to the lungs, where the unwanted excess is converted back to carbon dioxide and so exhaled. On top of this role, the carbonic acid, bicarbonate and hydrogen ions also constitute a buffer system that keeps body acidity at a constant optimum level. This is just right to maintain enzymes and proteins in their ideal folded shapes so they remain active and can carry out their cellular functions effectively.



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Of course, oily hydrocarbons do not dissolve in water; they are said to be hydrophobic. Lipids and proteins are made of hydrophilic parts associated with hydrocarbon segments that are repelled by water. The hydrophobic effect of water then drives the lipids into the membrane structures needed for the walls of cells and cell components. Furthermore, the hydrophobic effect powers the intricate folding of enzymes into the specific shapes needed for them to carry out their cellular roles.²

Water wires and proton pumps

Water actively participates in cell processes in yet another unexpected way. Chains of water molecules, in the unique hydrogen-bonded networks mentioned above, facilitate the movement of electrically charged protons. A positively charged proton can attach to the end of such a chain, and this initiates a sequence in which hydrogen bonds all along the chain rapidly re-align such that a proton is then released from the other end of the chain. These linked chains of water molecules are known as

'water wires' or 'proton wires'. Proton charge and energy are thereby conducted along the length of the wires and shuttled with great facility, often through membranes, to the point of need. Proton gradients generated across cell membranes in this way furnish power to living cells.³

Of course, water is an essential player in the functioning of brain cells. Neurons also require water for energy production, as well as in chemical and electrical signalling: so water intimately influences human information



gathering and storage; how our brains process and evaluate information; the very thoughts we continually generate! These few illustrations, chosen from many more, demonstrate how absolutely central water is to living processes.⁴

Disastrous water pollution and contamination

This information starkly illuminates the disastrousness of water pollution and contamination. Water is so easily polluted! It has aptly been said:

'Add a drop of water to a tank of sewage and it remains a tank of sewage!

Add a drop of sewage to a tank of water and it becomes a tank of sewage!'

Each day we human beings need to take in fresh, clean water to survive. Adult males need about 3 litres, while females need about 2.2 litres. We can very readily, perhaps unknowingly, contaminate our water. Alcohol is so socially acceptable. As it circulates, and as it enters cell plasma, straight away it disrupts the intricate hydrogen-bonded water networks. The more alcohol, the more body temperature control deteriorates, bio-fluid acidity is disturbed, enzyme folding and activity slacken, proton gradients diminish, and neuron connectivity and signalling falter. Damaging short- and long-term consequences for body and brain function inevitably follow!

Although 70% of Planet Earth's surface is covered with water, only about 3% of that is fresh water and most of that is tied up in polar ice caps and glaciers, or is too far underground, or is highly polluted. Sadly, only a precious 0.5% is available as drinkable fresh water! It's estimated that nearly two billion people on this planet don't have access to clean drinking water! Yet it's indispensable for



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human health and well-being, and to relieve poverty and hunger.

Over and over again, aid workers in the field report that water is life; that access to clean water immediately improves public health and makes life easier and safer. Getting clean water for the first time brings the start of a new life. Healthier kids stay in school and learn. Healthier families work much more effectively and save money on medicine and treatments. Health begets optimism and enterprise. Clean water always promotes better opportunities and stronger economies, and helps to end poverty.

Getting involved

Probably the most effective way any individual can help to 'save the environment' is by supporting in every possible way programmes to prevent water pollution and provide fresh, clean drinking water. ADRA (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) delivers relief and developmental assistance to individuals in more than 130 countries, regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation, or religious

association. Provision of clean water and sanitation is a priority objective for ADRA. There are also many other agencies engaged in delivering clean drinking water, and Wikipedia offers a rather long list at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_water-related_charities.

Water is the gravest resource issue for both our own and succeeding generations. Water purification and provision will be a growth area for the foreseeable future. There is an urgent need for bright and enterprising young people who care about the environment and about humanitarian issues to take up careers in this area. Could that be you?

¹For more details about how exceptional water is, see: Philip Ball, *H₂O: A biography of water*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1999; Michael Denton, *The Wonder of Water*, Discovery Institute Press, Seattle, 2017.

²Philip Ball, 'Water as an Active Constituent in Cell Biology', *Chemical Reviews*, 2008, vol. 108, pp. 74-108

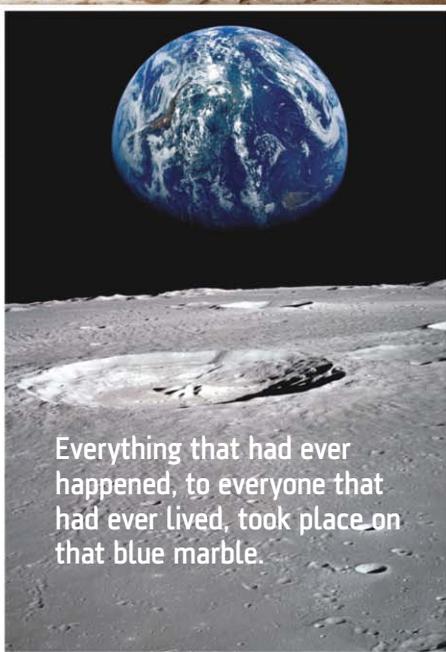
³Alok Jha, *The Water Book*, Headline Publishing, London, 2015

⁴For a list of anomalous properties of water, see: Martin Chapman, 'Anomalous Properties of Water', *Water Structure and Science*, http://www1.lsbu.ac.uk/water/water_anomalies.html (accessed 21 March 2019).



I don't want to exploit others

by Jenni Logan



Everything that had ever happened, to everyone that had ever lived, took place on that blue marble.

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Yesterday, as it happens, was my very first shift at an Edinburgh sustainable food store.

My dad says that the store looks just like the health food shop that my grandpa used to run in Paisley, near Glasgow, back in the 1960s. In a region not famed for its cuisine (deep-fried Mars bar, anyone?), trying to sell health food in the west of Scotland was something of an uphill struggle. Faced with the difficulties of running a shop that wouldn't

open on Sabbaths, my grandfather eventually sold the shop, bought a farm, and moved on to run a plant nursery.

Back then it seemed as if the Earth was limitless. North Sea oil had been discovered, and everybody was going to be *rich*. Significant works like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* were not yet significant enough, and the ecology movement was yet to really get started. The only people who seemed to care about these things, well . . . their hair was too long and

there was a suspicious amount of frolicking through the forests. Not for decent folks like us, thanks.

In 1968 a famous photograph lit a fire underneath that nascent ecology movement. 'Earthrise', taken by the Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders, was the first photograph ever of the entire planet Earth. It was a bit of a shock. Everything that had ever happened, to everyone that had ever lived, took place on that blue marble. Anders could stretch out his arm and cover the site of all human existence with his thumb. Maybe things weren't so infinite after all.

This was the time in which my father was growing up. He describes classes at the Bridge of Weir primary school where 'we sat under the desk to protect ourselves from the nuclear missiles that would inevitably rain down on the Faslane naval base a few miles away'. Thankfully it was only a practice, and nuclear war never happened. Humanity got its collective act together, and we all managed not to wipe ourselves out. Hurrah for us!

Fifty years on, we seem to be hitting a new sort of terminal crisis.

We are often fascinated by the Apocalypse, but – let's be honest – environmental collapse is not how we thought it would pan out. Our existential crisis has shifted from worrying about SS20s and ICBMs to worrying about a 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature rise, and the resultant 'natural' calamities. Perhaps, come the Second Coming, we'll be scooped up from our residences on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch? It's not quite the ending we had in mind.

The Earth went from infinite, to restricted, to breakable. And it didn't take very long.

While I arrived rather too late to see my grandfather's health food vision, when I relayed my enthusiasm about my local sustainable shop find to my grandma, she eagerly shared stories of her time spent working in Grandpa's store. Upon my recounting the merits of the reusable bags we use in the cooperative, she laughed and told me that 'in my day we reused everything'. Twenty years after the Second World War, the plastic world in which I now live had yet to be invented.

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My church has an interesting history when it comes to being ecologically sound. Our forebears were very keen on fresh air, clean water and a healthy veggie diet. Their reasoning may have been personal health – and in a world where everything was apparently infinite that may have been the only reason possible – but now it is 2019. The Paris Climate Accord may be falling apart, and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch could even issue you a passport (I kid you not).¹ As a 23-year-old Christian intent on taking care of the body God gave me and preventing the polar ice caps from melting, what am I to make of all this? As I lug a bag of organic chickpeas up the stairs to the shop floor, I'm doing exactly what my grandfather did 60 years ago, but maybe now for different reasons.

For me, health is a pleasant by-product of the natural lifestyle we were always meant to have (and I am aware that I speak as one with the luxury of youth – as my father quotes, 'As you get older, it's not so much about avoiding disease; it's more about finding one that you like!').

For me, I want to do this because, on every level, I don't want a life built on the exploitation of others. Do I want my milk to come from cows that are more udder than cow? My eggs from chickens that have never seen the sun? My clothing from factories that I would *not be allowed to work in* because of the laws of the land in which I was fortunate enough to be born? Christ said, 'Love your neighbour' – and, nowadays, my neighbour thrice-removed is a garment worker in Bangladesh.

Sustainable living, for me, involves more than just putting the correct rubbish into the correct bin. Loving my neighbour means refusing to take part in fast fashion. It means doing all we can to reduce inequality, to create better healthcare, actively tithing our time as well as our money (beach clean-up anyone?), and being consistently aware of our actions as well as our words.

One of the upsides of our ever-shrinking world is that I know where the products in my life come from, and so now, more than ever before, I have a responsibility to clean up my act. It is absurd and unacceptable that living a life like mine is ecologically unaffordable – meaning that, necessarily, huge portions of the world's resources are spent supporting me, *and at the expense of the lives of others*. My daily practices and habits are so small, but incrementally important. In my life, sustainable principles are behind my eco-movement *and* behind my faith.

With the technology and opportunity now afforded to me, loving my neighbour looks not only like bringing cookies on moving-in day, but also like ethical shopping, minimalism, and (hello again, old friend healthy lifestyle!) even veganism. Our church's encouragement to live healthily has done us (accidentally?) proud thus far, and I think Christianity's main tenets are also ideal for supporting a sustainable lifestyle. We need to do whatever we can, wherever we are, to actively love our neighbours and our shared home.

So, if you ever find yourself in Edinburgh, pay me a visit at the co-op in Argyle Place on a Tuesday afternoon. I'll send you home with

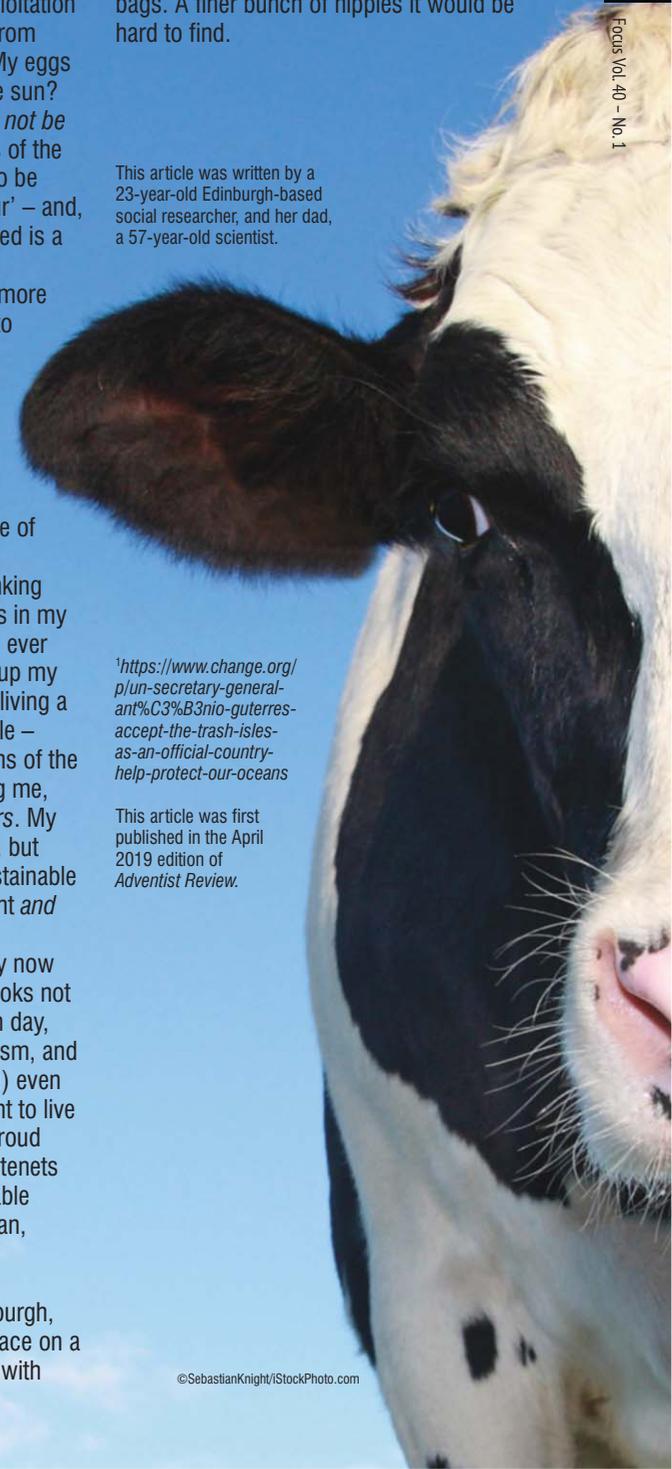
some ethical quality goods in recycled paper bags. A finer bunch of hippies it would be hard to find.

This article was written by a 23-year-old Edinburgh-based social researcher, and her dad, a 57-year-old scientist.

¹<https://www.change.org/p/un-secretary-general-ant%C3%B3nio-guterres-accept-the-trash-isles-as-an-official-country-help-protect-our-oceans>

This article was first published in the April 2019 edition of *Adventist Review*.

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From rubbish dump to country park



What does it take for a piece of derelict waste ground to become a beautiful country park? Focus Editor David Neal met up with West London clergyman David Bookless, who not only preaches creation care, but works tirelessly to make his local world better.

Minet Country Park is a 36-hectare area of land located at the western end of Southall, five miles north-west of Heathrow Airport. Owned by Hillingdon Council, it has been managed in partnership with A Rocha Living Waterways. Once farmland with a significant marshland area, it was owned prior to the Second World War by a Huguenot family. When the war was over, the land was given for the benefit of the community and came into public ownership. Neglected, left barren, subject to fly tipping and cut off from housing by a dual carriageway on one side and a canal on the other, it became forgotten land: that is, until the Reverend Dave Bookless became vicar of St George's, Southall.

Dave is a vicar with incredible passion and enthusiasm for creation care. I met him recently for the first time when he gave a lecture at Newbold College of Higher Education,

encouraging Christians to be at the forefront of saving Planet Earth. It quickly became clear that Dave lives what he preaches, which goes far beyond putting out his domestic rubbish for recycling! What particularly interested me was his connection with Minet, and how it turned from a one-time rubbish dump into a country park. Since I wanted to know more, a few weeks after his lecture he graciously agreed to meet up with me on location to tell the story.

Dave Bookless

I stumbled across it, really, because I became vicar of St George's, Southall, which just neighbours this area. With a small dog, I needed somewhere to walk, and found this area with a little bit of wildlife, and as I realised there was a river in this area I started to dream dreams.

David Neal

As Dave walks me around this significant 'green space' in the suburban jungle of West London, I see three housing tower blocks in the distance. Turning 180 degrees the other way, a massive A380 rises majestically into the sky like a giant bird from Heathrow's easterly runway. I ask Dave to imagine how it might have been 200-300 years ago.

DB

It was farmland and orchards, with small villages in this area and quite a lot of heathland for grazing, which can be described as non-intensive farmland. Closer to the river there was (and still is) wet grassland which gets marshy in winter. Being heathland has

protected the area from being developed, which in turn has helped the soil condition. It's ridiculously described as 'unimproved land', which sounds like a negative term, but actually the best kind of land is 'unimproved'. Isn't it ironic that to describe soil as 'improved' means you've spread chemicals over it? It would have been more or less like this up to just before the Second World War.

DN

With the area left more or less barren for almost 60 years, shopping trolleys in the canal, dumped refrigerators, and fly tipping, along comes a clergyman with a deep respect for God's creation, who dreams of what can be, and turns the dream into what we see. How did it go from dump to park?

DB

I'm not kidding you when I say that it took dogged determination and effort. One of the things we were keen to do from early on was to get the community involved to create a sense of ownership. All sorts of groups helped out – local churches, Muslim youth, Sikh youth, even youth from Feltham Young

Offenders' Institute. Whatever could be done by hand, we wanted moved by hand – building rubble, refrigerators, supermarket trolleys: the lot. And if the shell of a car could be moved, we moved it!

DN

There must have come a time when you needed skilled help.

DB

Once we obtained planning permission and shared the vision for the whole dump site to be turned into a park, sure, some parts of it needed to be done by professionals. Major landscaping and fencing had to be done. But when it came to tree planting, there was a clear plan of what would grow best and where. Planting was done in supervised groups, with lots of local schools involved in tree planting – which is great, because one of the things that has been sustained throughout is lots of involvement with local schools.

DN

We continue walking and I notice something that doesn't quite add up. Outside the park, north, south, east and west, the surrounding land is flat: but the park has quite a few mounds. A natural phenomenon, or intentional?

DB

Ah – the mounds! This was where rubbish was dumped.

DN

But I thought you wanted to get rid of rubbish?

DB

The mounds are interesting, because it was a very flat site, and as you can see they give character to the park. Most of the actual rubbish on the site was cleared away, but, in order to pay for everything to be done, one of the really creative things was to get permission from the council to agree to accept clean rubble from building sites. Normally for this you have to pay to have rubble and building waste dumped in landfill. But if it's certified to

be clean, to be non-polluting, then any landowner can be paid to accept it, and that's what was done here. All these mounds are basically building rubble.

DN

And that's it?

DB

Well, not quite, because there's also some significant history buried here. You'd be amazed – are you ready for this? Underneath the grass you see are chairs from the old Wembley Stadium. A huge amount of the stadium is buried here, rubble and concrete – nothing too nasty – covered with local topsoil that was spread to regenerate some places completely from scratch, and in other places planted with wild flowers and grasses. And it's great because it's not only provided some contours for the site, but it's also helped pay for the whole thing. Amazing when you think about it, isn't it?

DN

The idea of 'old Wembley' underneath the mounds creates in itself a wholeness to the place. It almost says that there's no such thing as rubbish: or, at the very least, what we think is rubbish and want no more continues to have a use. As our brief time together comes to an end, I'm energised not only by a good walk, and the richness of this space for Southall citizens to connect with nature, but for Dave's concern to care for our created world, and that the people in it should enjoy life at its best. By any measure of the imagination, this is a prime West London site. How 'the developer' missed

this space, I do not know. Yet, where it all could have been laid to concrete, kingfishers, butterflies, and dragonflies thrive along waterways and flood relief channels surrounding the park. As we come to the end of our conversation, and our walk, a sudden concern comes over me about the park's upkeep. Could it ever again become wasteland? Who really provides upkeep for the park? Does the partnership between Hillingdon Council and volunteers work well?

DB

To all essential purposes, yes. Where we are standing, by the waterway, volunteers regularly make sure shopping trolleys are removed. This bit is kind of fought between the Highways Agency (on the other side of the waterway is the dual carriageway) and the Waterways Board, who look after the rivers and the canals. Occasionally, one or the other of them will say, 'We have to clean things up.' But it mainly ends up with volunteers doing it. The council don't actually touch this section of the park where we are standing. They tend to care for the entrance area and the car park.

DN

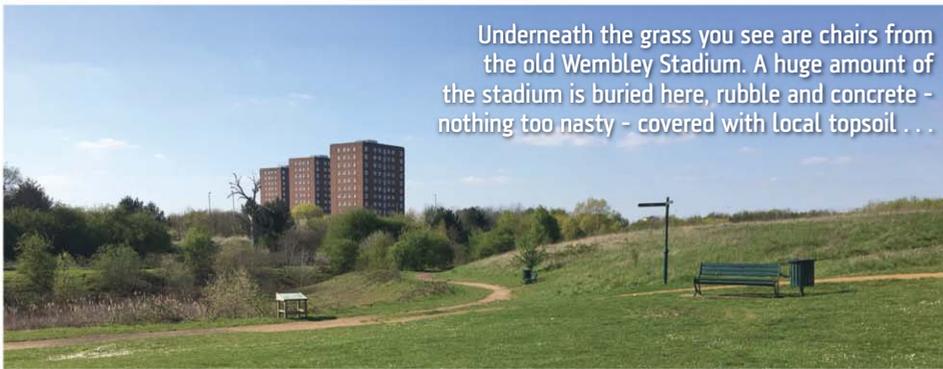
Thanks, Dave, for the tour, and all the very best with your creation care ministry work!

Further details about Minet Country Park can be found at <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/minetcountrypark>.

Details of A Rocha UK, which is dedicated to caring for God's earth, can be found at <https://www.arocha.org/en/>.

Details of the many countries A Rocha works in around the world can be found at <https://www.arocha.org/en/>.

Underneath the grass you see are chairs from the old Wembley Stadium. A huge amount of the stadium is buried here, rubble and concrete – nothing too nasty – covered with local topsoil . . .



When nutters became mainstream

There was a time in the UK and Ireland when vegetarians were seen as cranky! 'That poor boy could do with some meat on his bones,' said Grandma to her wayward daughter who'd become a vegetarian. During the 1960s the daughter and her husband decided that vegetarianism was their lifestyle choice for health and animal compassion reasons. The protests from the traditionalists were loud and prejudiced, as Grandma would often exclaim, 'If that boy doesn't have meat, where's he going to get his protein from?'

Thankfully, since those days we're much more aware that a high intake of animal fat (including dairy) is not the best for optimum health. In more recent times not only are we fast learning that 'we are what we eat', but 'our world is what we eat'. The twenty-first-century rule is to eat not only to save yourself, but to save the world!

A few months back the *Focus* editor went on a bit of a wander. How the world has changed:

Takeaway café at Borough Market, Southwark, London. From left to right: the classic vegan cheeseburger, the classic 'facon' cheeseburger, 'the holy smoke and facon', and a 'facon', lettuce and tomato sandwich.



Let's put this as subtly as we can. When Greggs start selling vegan sausage rolls, is it fair to say that a huge trend in consumer behaviour is taking place for the better?

Milk alternatives are becoming increasingly popular. At almost every Amsterdam tram stop this last autumn was this advert for oat milk.



And, finally, could you really eat this?



©J.Mrocek/StockPhoto.com

Health warning: just because it's vegan doesn't mean it's best for optimum health. Vegan products also have the potential to contain high levels of fat, sugar and salt. It's also possible that they may not always have the best carbon footprint: for example, if they're made in China.

Discernment in all these things is key. And if somebody you know hasn't yet joined you at level 5 of vegetarianism or veganism, mercy and grace is the winsome way!

The eco-college in leafy Berkshire

by Victor Hulbert and
Sajitha Forde-Ralph

How do you heat a red-brick Jacobethan mansion built in 1864? That was the challenging question facing governors at Newbold College of Higher Education. The boilers were ageing and running on a crude, thick, black heating oil.

I know, because I used to clean them when I was a cash-strapped Theology

student earning my fees back in the 1970s! So dirty was the job that I got paid time-and-a-half for taking on a task that few wanted to do. And it wasn't just the historic Moor Close that ran the aged boilers, but every building on campus.

But now things are different. Almost forty years since graduating I now visit the college regularly, serving on their Board of

Governors; but when I pass by the boiler rooms they look and

smell better. The black oil is a thing of the past, replaced by wood pellets. The college buildings are warm – and, best of all, the heating is carbon-neutral.

That is intentional. Today's millennials are concerned about environmental issues – so students are positive about the changes. Staff are equally excited, as it provides a better working environment – and it also makes financial sense with the UK government's Renewable Heating Incentive.

For College Principal, Dr John Baidam, these changes make total sense and are part of an overall strategic plan for the development of the college. 'We now have a full complement of three biomass boilers,' he says, 'with generous returns coming from central government. We are also operating a far greener campus. This includes doing our best to recycle all we can. For instance, students now carry water bottles rather than using the plastic cups we used to provide for our water fountains.'

The biomass boilers are just part of a series of projects that make the college more eco-friendly.

LED lighting replaces traditional light bulbs, while (where permitted by conservation regulations) new, state-of-the-art windows reduce draughts and reflect heat in the summer. Additional insulation with new roofs for all main buildings has also reduced heating costs, while a new servery in the cafeteria is designed to reduce food waste.

Newbold is located in beautiful rural Berkshire. Lovely walks are found just around the corner from the campus, so, while the campus boasts a gym (now newly refurbished as a modern sports hall/auditorium), students are also tempted by the beauty of the countryside, or even by the tranquillity of the campus itself. Sylvia's Garden, on the southern edge of the campus, is included in the UK's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens and also features in Historic England's Register of Gardens and Parks. While the garden still needs substantial investment to bring it up to Historic England's standards, it is still a stunning place that attracts those who enjoy nature or who

seek a quiet place to reflect or meditate in the quiet beauty of the morning sunrise.

Yet it is not just on campus where students and staff show their care for the environment. During Impact Day each semester students and staff involve themselves in projects in the local community, caring for community gardens, litter picking, or interacting with the community on a variety of projects. They even offer a free car wash to local residents. Students are encouraged to volunteer via a dedicated page on the college website.

Students clearly come to Newbold for the academic programme, whether that is Theology, Business Studies, Humanities, English Language, or the various shorter programmes like the Year in Mission and Service. What a joy that they also get to experience those studies on an environmentally friendly campus.

This article first appeared in the online
Adventist Church news bulletin,
tedNEWS, 22 April 2018.



'LEG GODT'?

Without a care in the world, there I was back in the 1960s on the living room carpet, planning for a better and brighter future. Life was good; I knew what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go. With my mind full of hope, the shapes and colours of the Lego bricks in front of me tantalised my imagination. I could see the size and colour of the house I was going to build. It would have two doors, four windows, a sloping red roof, and a garden with a low fence around it. Would it have a yellow or a blue door, a white fence or green?

The word 'Lego' comes from the Danish phrase 'leg godt', which means 'play well'. I did just that, as millions of children still do today. With 86 pieces for every person on earth, Lego continues to be a brilliant global brand which encourages young minds to build a better world.

I think it was in the 1950s that the 'injection moulding' of synthetic materials gained mass

and affordable appeal. It was the revolutionary new and ultimate convenience material. Wood, leather and stone were still around, but they didn't excite like plastic. Plastic introduced a spectrum of new shapes and colours in design. It was time to experiment, and not just with the Lego brick. By the 1970s furniture in all sorts of weird and wonderful shapes, sizes, and colours appeared. Remember the bright orange plastic chairs in church halls and community centres?

As seems so often the case, progress often creates further problems. We call it the law of unintended consequences. It was never our intent for eight million tonnes of plastic waste to end up in the sea each year. That's bad news for the British fish-and-chip lover, with a study from the University of Plymouth showing that plastic is found in a third of UK-caught fish.¹ A bit of a shame, that – plastic in the food chain.

While I may be worried about the quality of

my fish and chips, that's small fry when it comes to what we're really dealing with. *National Geographic* reported in its July 2017 edition on a new and massive amount of plastic floating in the South Pacific Ocean, a million square miles in size.² Shampoo bottles, bags, and styrofoam packaging make the beach look ugly, but it's the abundance of microplastic particles that's giving new cause for concern and having an effect on the global ecosystem. The same edition reports that globally 91% of plastic never gets recycled.³ 'Wild Pacific Salmon' doesn't seem to have the same ring to it as it once did.

What to do?

In the end, it comes down to the choices we make, from the products we purchase to the ways we dispose of them. Convenience draws me to purchase a new plastic water bottle from the store. A slight change in behaviour will make me use the same bottle countless times.

To 'play well' is exactly what God did when He created our world with an imagination 'higher than the highest human thought can reach'.⁴ He made it with both skill and love, and then He got personal and made us with a simple request to look after it, manage it, and I'd even suggest 'play well', as He did. It's one we continue to struggle with. Could belief in God, resulting from a deeper appreciation of

who He is, make us better managers of His world, as reflected in these ancient words written 2,400 years ago?

'O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Your glory is higher than the heavens.

You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers –

the moon and the stars you set in place – what are mere mortals that you should think about them,

human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.

You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority – the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals,

the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.

O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!⁵

¹University of Plymouth report, 'Plastic Pollution and the Planet' – <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/pr-opinion/plastic-pollution-and-the-planet>

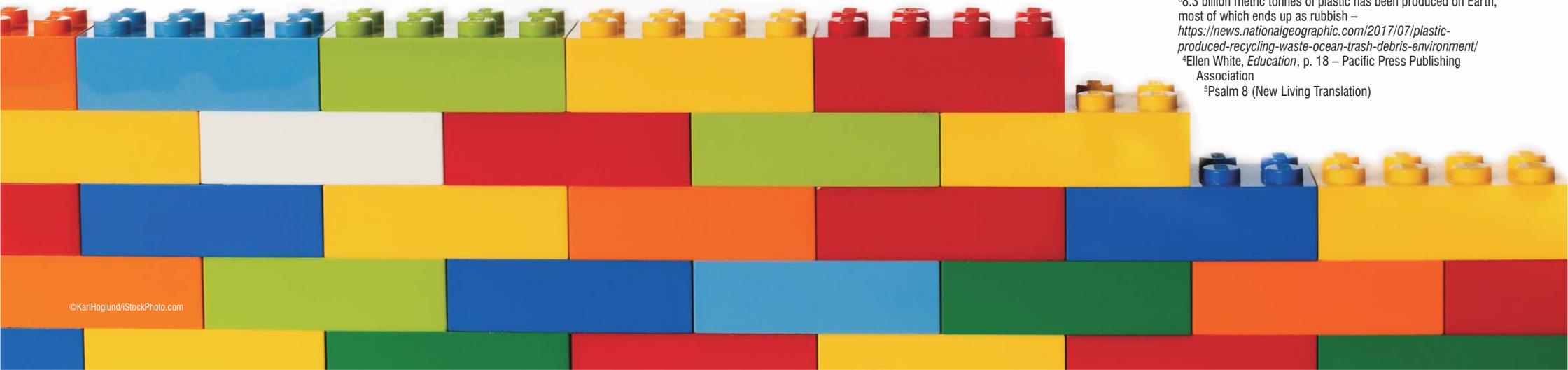
²The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is located halfway between Hawaii and California – <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/ocean-plastic-patch-south-pacific-spd/>

³8.3 billion metric tonnes of plastic has been produced on Earth, most of which ends up as rubbish –

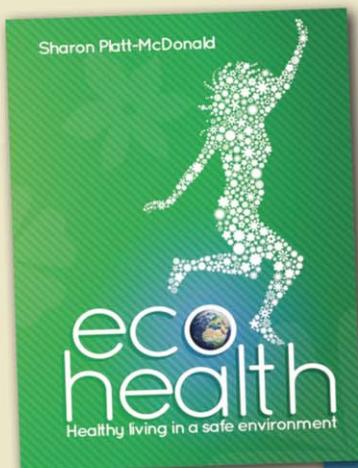
<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment/>

⁴Ellen White, *Education*, p. 18 – Pacific Press Publishing Association

⁵Psalm 8 (New Living Translation)



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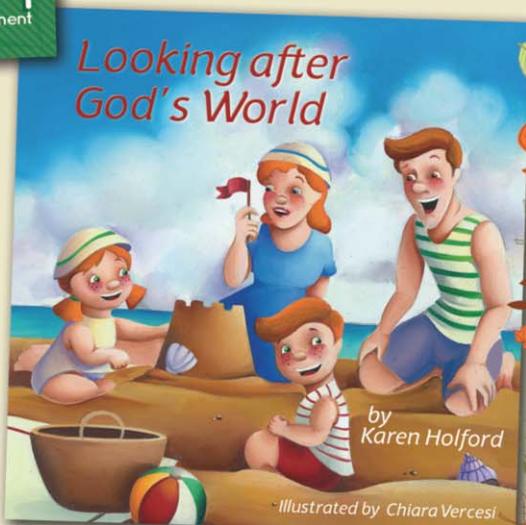
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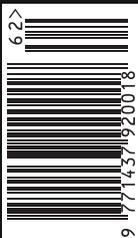
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