

Psalm 22:2-3 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; by night as well, but I find no rest. Yet you are the Holy One, enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

We have a problem. A big one. One so big that some think that we are about to run out of time to do anything about it. I'm not yet hopeless, emphasis on *yet*. Some days are better than others; half of the days leave me feeling emotionally and spiritually catatonic. I can barely utter the question that streams from mind to tongue: *what in the world are we doing? Have we become so consumed with consumption that we will consume the ground from under our feet? Would we really rather self-destruct than self-reflect?*

Our relationship with the land is in dire-straits, and it has been for a while, like centuries. A long time ago we lost the idea that from the earth we were pulled and formed and into that dust begotten form God breathed life. Over the course of time, we lost sight of our forever and necessary dependence on the land, not just in what it can offer up to us, but that it must be here for us to be here. Long ago, we let something else lure us into reconceiving the centrality of our existence in *opposition* to the world. Humanity *against* the land; when the land resists, you fight back bigger and harder and win.

“cursed is the ground because of you;
 in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
 and you shall eat the plants of the field.
 By the sweat of your face
 you shall eat bread
 until you return to the ground,
 for out of it you were taken;
 you are dust,
 and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:17-19)

From my perspective, it's as if we've let our interpretation of Genesis 3:17-19 and its tendency toward the concept of domination triumph over the concept of dominion in Genesis 1.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind in his image,
 in the image of God he created them;
 male and female he created them.

“God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” (Gen 1:26-28)

We've become convinced *we* are a gift to land as if without our direction it would be lost, that it must be tamed and controlled (this is domination). We've forgotten that we came from the land and that this land is a gift to us which we are asked to care for and exhorted to make sure it thrives (this is dominion having).¹ We've become convinced *we* were the point of creation, that the entire story is about us that we are center stage; we've forgotten that there's another character on this stage of life, our partner, the earth.

“In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen 2:4b-9)

I think one issue causing our malnourished view about connection to the soil is particularly unique to Christianity. We create a hierarchy between the event of the Cross and the event of Creation—making the cross the greater divine event over the event of creation. However, the two are profoundly linked. Yes, there is a great distance between the mythology of Genesis 1 and 2 about the creation of humanity out of the dirt and the Easter stories embedded in the Gospel narratives of Jesus. In the end, though, both events of Creation and Resurrection (Recreation)--the forming of humanity from the soil and the calling forth of Jesus from the deep pit—are the same event. And as we Christians claim we are dependent on God for our recreation, so should we see we are dependent on God for creation, too. Just as we cannot call ourselves out from the dead, we cannot call forth our own existence. We are all dependent on others, on the land, and on God. Thinking that we are the authors of our own existences has led us to the domination of the land and away from dominion.

Another aspect is that we've lost the mystery of story. We've become so practical, and sensible, scientific and intellectual we've “outgrown” stories and myths. We've let that spatial distance between Genesis and the Gospels maneuver its way into our minds and hearts. *Where are our stories? Where are our story-tellers?* While, yes, we can affirm that the stories written down centuries ago about God forming the earth in a specific pattern and in a set time are not scientific accounts of the creation of the cosmos, but does that also mean we must throw them out? Do they not still hint at a truth albeit abstract and written in archaic characters and from a different era? Must STEM triumph over the

¹ “So here, the creation of humanity in God’s *image* and *likeness* carries with it a commission to rule over the animal kingdom...some have seen in that commission a license for ecological irresponsibility. The fact is, however, that the Tanakh presents humanity not as the owner of nature but as its steward, strictly accountable to its true Owner...” Jon D. Levenson *Jewish Study Bible* Tanakh Translation Oxford: JPS, 2004.

Humanities and the Arts? Is what is actual better than what is possible? If so, then what do we do with hope, with love, with the divine movement of the Holy Spirit, or those goose bumps you feel when struck with otherly inspiration?

Taking both issues together—the primacy of Crucifixion over Creation and our loss of story and mystery—we have lost ourselves in ourselves and our accomplishments and have given ourselves over to domination while forsaking dominion, thus a fundamental aspect of our humanity is lost. We've also participated in trying to strip other people of their land and their stories, too; denying humanity to others. This is the way of domination: it knows only destruction and death. Rather let us be exhorted in and through our manifold and brilliant stories to be called back to dominion having. Let us feel the soil upon our fingertips and toes and remember vividly that it is of this soil we are taken and to this soil we will return. In doing so, we will foster life: life within ourselves, life within the land, and life of others of the land.

Pokoh, The Old Man (Ute Legend)

Pokoh, Old Man, they say, created the world. Pokoh had many thoughts. He had many blankets in which he carried around gifts for men. He created every tribe out of the soil where they used to live.

That is why an Indian wants to live and die in his native place. He was made of the same soil. Pokoh did not wish men to wander and travel, but to remain in their birthplace.

Long ago Sun was a man, and was bad. Moon was good. Sun had a quiver full of arrows, and they are deadly. Sun wishes to kill all things.

Sun has two daughters (Venus and Mercury) and twenty men kill them; but after fifty days they return to life again.

Rainbow is the sister of Pokoh, and her breast is covered with flowers.

Lightning strikes the ground and fills the flint with fire. That is the origin of fire. Some say the beaver brought fire from the east, hauling it on his broad, flat tail. That is why the beaver's tail has no hair on it, even to this day. It was burned off.

There are many worlds. Some have passed and some are still to come. In one world the Indians all creep; in another they all walk; in another they all fly. Perhaps in a world to come, Indians may walk on four legs; or they may crawl like snakes; or they may swim in the water like fish.²

² <https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/PokohtheOldMan-Ute.html>. And <http://snowowl.com/legends/ute/ute001.html>