Some editions of the King James Version of the Bible include a very interesting feature. The words attributed to Jesus were printed in red. These words seemed to jump right off the page. However, the recurring search for Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* (very words) question the authenticity of those words. The ideas expressed might have been Jesus’ ideas, but the words are not necessarily his. This scholarly finding does not undermine the value of this particular publishing feature; it simply modifies the way we understand it. After all, Jesus did not speak the “King’s English,” so the words in red could not have been the exact words of Jesus.

In 2008, HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, issued a text of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible under the title *The Green Bible*. In its very composition the book lives up to its name. The ink used to print it is soy based; the paper and the binding are all recyclable. The volume contains several fine eco-sensitive features not found in other bibles. Its most distinguishing characteristic is its similarity to the red words in the King James Version, for in *The Green Bible* passages that relate to the integrity of creation and the environment are printed in green. In both versions, the purpose for printing words in a certain color is the same: in the King James Version, the red print demonstrated the conviction that the words of Jesus have theological importance; in *The Green Bible*, the green print underscores the conviction that care for creation has ecotheological importance.

*The Green Bible* has several other interesting features. Where many Catholic versions of the Bible open with a copy of *Dei Verbum, (The Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation)*, this Bible opens with St. Francis of Assisi’s *The Canticle of the Creatures*, followed by a poem by the well-known naturalist Wendell Berry. In the foreword of the book, Archbishop Desmond Tutu exhorts readers to be both people friendly and envi-

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**Dianne Bergant, C.S.A.,** is professor of biblical studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois. She served as president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America in 2000–2001 and has been a member of the Chicago Catholic/Jewish Scholars Dialogue for more than twenty years. A prolific author, she held the chair of Distinguished Professor of Christian Culture at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island in 2009–2010. She is working in the areas of biblical interpretation and biblical theology, particularly issues of peace, ecology, and feminism.
ronment friendly. The preface highlights the special features of this Bible: green letters; a green subject index that covers topics such as animals, land, and water; a *Green Bible* trail guide consisting of a series of bible studies on themes associated with the care of creation; and several essays by leading conservationists and eco-theologians.

The publisher's promotion for this book states that the Bible contains about 490 references to heaven and about 530 references to love, two themes universally considered prominent. However, there are more than 1,000 references to creation. One cannot help but ask, "How have we overlooked this for so long?" This oversight in itself more than justifies printing those references in green so that they can jump right off the page as we read. However, as the title of this article indicates, green inking does not guarantee green thinking.

**Green Inking**

In order to remedy our ignorance of the scope of the theme "integrity of creation" and its ramifications in our lives, essays in the beginning of this bible open our eyes to various aspects of green thinking. The introductory essay, "The Power of a Green God," was written by J. Matthew Sleeth, a medical doctor. He traces his own discovery of the importance of the created world and his place within it. The essay by Calvin B. Dewitt, "Reading the Bible Through a Green Lens," addresses obstacles that might prevent green thinking, obstacles like an exaggerated spiritualism that insists we were created for heaven, not for earth; or a narrow anthropocentrism that claims we can do what we want with creation, for God instructed us to "subdue the earth and have dominion" (Gen 1:28). It offers several eco-sensitive principles that can reshape our thinking on these issues.

For more than two decades, popes have dedicated their New Year's Day message to some aspect of the theme of creation. In "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation" (1990), Pope John Paul II insists that the ecological crisis is a moral problem, and he maintains that care of the earth is the responsibility of all. Brian McLaren, a prominent evangelical writer explains, "Why I Am Green," and how his eco-sensitive thinking has challenged some of his earlier theological understanding. Ecotheology is not the exclusive concern of Christian religious thinkers. Ellen Bernstein, the founder of the first national Jewish environmental organization writes, "Creation Theology: A Jewish Perspective." She proposes what she calls the "ten commandments of creation theology," commandments that she draws from the creation narratives of the Bible.

In "Knowing Our Place on Earth," Ellen Davis, a professor of Bible and practical theology, turns to various passages the Old Testament to find insight into our responsibility for the environmental crisis facing us and guidance for dealing with that crisis. James Jones, an Anglican bishop, writes about "Jesus: Savior of the Earth." He expands the notion of salvation and shows where in the New Testament this broader perspective can be found. A second Anglican bishop, N. T. Wright, who is also one of the world's top New Testament scholars, challenges us with his exhortation, "Jesus is Coming: Plant a Tree." He seeks to bring the biblical message about creation into dialogue with the contemporary world. In "The Dominion of Love," Barbara Brown Taylor, a professor of spirituality, argues that the myriad examples of God's playful creativity are evidence of God's love all of creation. She argues that, since we human beings are made in the image of God, we should love creation as well.

Gordon Aeschliman, the author of "Loving the Earth is Loving the Poor," is founding editor of *Green Cross* magazine. He
insists that doing justice for the poor and serving God’s creation are inseparable missions that all are called to by virtue of their baptism. Finally, J. Matthew Sleeth brings the collection of essays to a close with a collection of more than one hundred quotations from publications as diverse as the Babylonian Talmud, the memoirs of Thérèse of Lisieux, and the writings of evangelical minister Rick Warren. Each of these quotations captures some aspect of the magnificence of creation, our place within it, or our responsibility toward it.

**Green Thinking**

Just what does *The Green Bible* hope to accomplish? This question is answered in the preface of the book: “*The Green Bible* encourages you to see God’s vision for creation and helps you engage in the work of healing and sustaining it” (I–15). How does it hope to do this? The first step is by consciousness-raising. Most of us either did not know how often the Bible refers to aspects of creation or have not considered seriously the implication of this fact. While printing words in green might not in itself make a significant difference in our thinking, simply seeing words—any words—printed in this color will constantly call our attention to the issue.

An awareness of the importance of this issue can change our perception of it in a number of ways. It can encourage us to look anew at our understanding of ancient Near Eastern cosmology and the way the people in biblical times understood their place and role within it. We who are so accustomed to thinking of God as redeemer might reinvestigate the characterization of God as creator and the creator’s appraisal of all creation: “And [God] found it very good” (Gen 2:31). As important as these new insights into the thinking of our religious ancestors are for us, a new appreciation of what the Bible actually says is only the first step in green thinking. Since we believe that the message of the Bible is more than an historical curiosity but is the living word of God for us, any new insight that we might gain from an ecosensitive reading of it should somehow open us to new ways of living.

If God announced that all of creation is “very good,” how can we justify exploiting it, or polluting it? If the psalmist stood before creation and cried out—

> O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures

( Ps 104:24)

—how can we view the goods of the earth simply as commodities that are available to us for our own satisfaction? If Jesus pointed to the care that God shows the lilies of the field (Matt 6:28), how can we disregard the countless forms that life has taken by destroying their habitats? If Paul recognized that “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now,” how can we delay the appearance of the reign of God by our disregard for the cries of the earth?

The message found in passages such as these call us to the “new heaven and . . . new earth” envisioned by the author of Revelation (21:1). The green ink with which these verses are printed might not change our thinking immediately, but it can jump off the page and challenge us to think in new ways.