

TEACHINGS ON CREATION THROUGH THE AGES

I believe in God, the Father and the Creator of heaven and earth. THE APOSTLES' CREED FIRST CENTURY

Let us turn our eyes to the Father and Creator of the universe, and consider the total absence of any friction that marks the ordering of his whole creation. CLEMENT OF ROME ca37-101

The initial step for a soul to come to knowledge of God is contemplation of nature. IRENAEUS 120-202

The sending of rain is an event greater than the giving of the Torah. The Torah was a joy for Israel only, but rain gives joy to the entire world, including animals and birds. MIDRASH PSALMS SECOND CENTURY

Nature is teacher, the soul the pupil; and whatever one has taught or the other has learned has come from God – the Teacher of the teacher. TERTULLIAN 160-ca230

Whoever destroys anything that could be useful to others breaks the law of *bal tashchit*, 'Do not waste'. BABYLONIAN TALMUD SECOND/THURD CENTURY

While the sage, Honi, was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him 'How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit ?'

'Seventy years' replied the man.

Honi then asked 'Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit ?'

The man answered 'I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise I am planting for my children.' BABYLONIAN TALMUD SECOND/THURD CENTURY

By the greatness and the beauty of the creatures, proportionately the maker of them is seen. ATHANASIOUS 297-373

I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that wherever you go, the least plant may bring you the clear remembrance of the Creator.... One blade of grass or one speck of dust is enough to occupy your entire mind in beholding the art with which it has been made. BASIL THE GREAT 329-79

The world has been created for everyone's use, but you few rich are trying to keep it for yourselves. For not merely the possession of the earth, but the very sky, the air, and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few.... The earth belongs to all, not just to the rich. AMBROSE OF MILAN 340-97

There is nothing that has been created without some reason, even if human nature is incapable of knowing precisely the reason for them all. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ca 354-407

Even though you may think them superfluous in this world, creatures such as flies, bugs, and gnats have their allotted task in the scheme of creation. GENESIS RABBAH THIRD TO FIFTH CENTURIES

Without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, the earth cannot endure, and without either, humans cannot exist. GENESIS RABBAH THIRD TO FIFTH CENTURIES

Even if you are old, you must plant. Just as you found trees planted by others, you must plant them for your children. MIDRASH TANCHUMA FOURTH/FIFTH CENTURIES

Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you ! Look below you ! read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, he set before your eyes the things that he made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that ? AUGUSTINE 354-430

We should remain within the limits imposed by our basic needs and strive with all our power not to exceed them. Once we are carried beyond these limits in our desire for the pleasures of life, there is no criterion to check our onwards movement, since no bounds can be set to that which exceeds the necessary.

NILUS OF ANCYRA 407-94

How can a person of flesh and blood follow God ?..... God from the very beginning of creation, was occupied before all else with planting, as it is written 'And first of all, the Eternal God planted a Garden of Eden'. Therefore.... Occupy yourselves first and foremost with planting. LEVITICUS RABBAH FIFTH TO SEVENTH CENTURIES

'See my works, how fine and excellent they are ! All that I created, I created for you. Reflect on this, and do not corrupt and desolate my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.'

ECCLESIASTES RABBAH SIXTH/EIGHT CENTURIES

Poor innocent little creatures, if you were reasoning beings and could speak, you would curse us. For we are the cause of your death, and what have you done to deserve it ? ISAAC THE SYRIAN LATE SEVENTH CENTURY

The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God. JOHN OF DAMASCUS 675-749

I do not worship matter. I worship the Creator of matter who became for my sake, who willed to take his abode in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter.... Because of this I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with his grace and power. Through it my salvation has come to me. JOHN OF DAMASCUS 675-749

Christ wears 'two shoes' in the world: Scripture and Nature. Both are necessary to understand the Lord and at no stage can creation be seen as a separation of things from God. JOHN SCOTUS ERIUGENA 810-77

'They shall take dominion (v'yirdu). The Hebrew connotes both 'dominion' (derived from *radah*) and 'descent' (derived from *yarad*): when humanity is worthy, we have dominion over the animal kingdom; when we are not, we descend below the level of the animals and the animals rule over us. RASHI 1040-1105

Wherever I turn my eyes, around on Earth or to the heavens
I see you in the field of stars
I see you in the yield of the land
In every breath and sound, a blade of grass, a simple flower
An echo of your holy name. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA 1092-1167

We shall awaken from our dullness and rise vigorously toward justice. If we fall in love with creation deeper and deeper, we will respond to its enlargement with passion. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN 1098-1179

The quality of urban air compared to the air in the deserts and the forests is like thick and turbulent water compared to pure and light water. In the cities with their tall buildings and narrow roads, the pollution that comes from their residents, their waste makes their entire air reeking and thick although no one is aware of it. MAIMONIDES 1135-1204

An error about creation also leads to an error about God. THOMAS AQUINAS 1225-74

If I spend enough time with the tiniest creature – even a caterpillar – I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature. MEISTER ECKHART 1260- ca 1327

Let a man fear, above all, me, his God, and so much the gentler will he become toward my creatures and animals, on whom, on account of me, their Creator, he ought to have compassion. BIRGITTA 1303-73

I (God) did not intend my creatures to make themselves servants and slaves to the world's pleasures. They owe their first love to me. Everything else they should love and possess, as I told you, not as if they owned it, but as something lent them. CATHERINE OF SIENA 1347-80

If thy heart were right, then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and abject, but it reflects the goodness of God. THOMAS À KEMPIS 1380-1471

God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars. MARTIN LUTHER 1483-1546

The creation is quite like a spacious and splendid house, provided and filled with the most exquisite and the most abundant furnishings. Everything in it tells us of God. JOHN CALVIN 1509-64

Let everyone regard themselves as a steward of God in all things which they possess. Then they will neither conduct themselves dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved. JOHN CALVIN 1509-64

If we learn to love the earth, we will find labyrinths, gardens, fountains and precious jewels ! A whole new world will open itself to us. We will discover what it means to be truly alive. TERESA OF AVILA 1515-82

All creatures – not the higher creatures alone, but also the lower, according to that which each of them has received in itself from God – each one raises its voice in testimony to that which God is.... Each one after its manner exalts God, since it has God in itself. JOHN OF THE CROSS 1542-91

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of the earth and sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of the birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honour and glory of your name, now and forever. BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 1549

Open your eyes and behold, the whole world is full of God. JACOB BOEHME 1575-1624

Thou are in small things great, not small in any..... For thou are infinite in one and all. GEORGE HERBERT 1593-1633

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him; all creatures here below.... Praise God, the source of all our gifts. THOMAS KEN 1637-1711

It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world that they were better studied and known in the creation of it. For how could man find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great creator stare them in the face, in all and every part thereof ? WILLIAM PENN 1644-1718

There's not a plant or flower below but makes Thy glories known
And clouds arise, and tempests blow by order from Thy throne
While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care
And everywhere that we can be, Thou, God art present there. ISAAC WATTS 1674-1748

All created things are living in the hand of God. The senses see only the action of the creatures, but faith sees in everything the action of God. JEAN PIERRE DE CAUSSADE 1675-1751

All that is sweet, delightful, and amiable in this world, in the serenity of the air, the fineness of the seasons, the joy of light, the melody of sounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrancy of smells, the splendour of precious stones, is nothing else but Heaven breaking through the veil of this world. WILLIAM LAW 1686-1761

I believe in my heart that faith in Jesus Christ can and will lead us beyond an exclusive concern for the well-being of other human beings to the broader concern for the well-being of the birds in our backyards, the fish in our rivers, and every living creature on the face of the earth. JOHN WESLEY 1701-91

When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the bounteous rainbow, we behold the adumbrations of his glory and goodness, and in the blue sky, of his mildness and gentleness. JONATHAN EDWARDS 1703-58

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age. JOHN WOOLMAN 1720-72

If you don't love trees, you don't love God. NIKEPHOROS OF CHIOS 1750-1821

All abuse and waste of God's creatures are spoil and robbery on the property of the Creator.
ADAM CLARKE 1762-1832

Beauty is but the sensible image of the infinite. Like truth and justice, it lives within us; like virtue and the moral law, it is a companion of the soul. GEORGE BANCROFT 1800-91

All that I have ever seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all that I have not seen. RALPH WALDO EMERSON 1803-82

Earth is crammed with Heaven
And every bush aflame with God
But only those who see take off their shoes. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING 1806-61

Love all of God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light !
Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY 1821-81

If it were not for the outside world, we should have no inside world to understand things by. Least of all could we understand God without these millions of sights and sounds and scents and motions weaving their endless harmonies. They come out of his heart to let us know a little of what is in it. GEORGE MACDONALD 1824-1905

Ten thousand leaves on every tree, and each a miracle to me; and yet there be those who question God !
JOAQUIN MILLER 1837-1913

When a group of people are sailing in a boat, none of them has a right to bore a hole under their own seat.
ISRAEL MEIR HA-KOHEN 1838-1933

Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life's become extinct, the climates are ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.
ANTON CHEKHOV 1860-1904

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in. GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER 1864-1943

In the created world around us we see the Eternal Artist at work. EVELYN UNDERWOOD 1875-1941

The harvested fields bathed in the autumn mists speak of God and his goodness far more vividly than any human lips. ALBERT SCHWEITZER 1875-1965

I am I plus my surroundings, and if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself. JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET 1883-1955

A wrong attitude towards nature implies somewhere a wrong attitude towards God. TS ELLIOT 1888-1965

A society in which consumption has to be artificially stimulated in order to keep production going is a society founded on trash and waste, and as such a society is a house built upon sand. DOROTHY SAYERS 1893-1957

It can thus rightly be asked if, in spite of all his conquests, man is not turning back against himself the results of his activity. Having rationally endeavoured to control nature, is he not now becoming the slave of the objects he makes ? POPE PAUL VI 1897-1978

We need to find God, but we cannot find him in noise or in excitement. See how nature, the trees, the flowers, the grass grow in deep silence. See how the stars, the moon and the sun all move in silence. MOTHER TERESA 1910-97

One has to be alone, under the sky, before everything falls into place and one finds his own place in the midst of it all. THOMAS MERTON 1915-68

The seriousness of ecological degradation lays bare the depths of man's moral crisis..... simplicity, moderation, and discipline as well as the spirit of sacrifice must become a part of everyday life. POPE JOHN PAUL II 1920-2005

Christians will want to be in the vanguard in favouring ways of life that decisively break with the exhausting and joyless frenzy of consumerism. POPE JOHN PAUL II 1920-2005

The maternal sea is polluted, the heavens are rent, the forests are being destroyed and the desert areas are increasing. We must protect creation. Better yet, we must embellish it, render it spiritual, transfigure it. But nothing will be done unless there is a general conversion of people's hearts and minds. PATRIARCH IGNATIUS IV OF ANTIOCH 1921-2012

If nature is not transfigured, she becomes disfigured. PATRIARCH IGNATIUS IV OF ANTIOCH 1921-2012

Once we repossess a sense of our own holiness, we will recover the sense of the holiness of the world..... only in this way will we once again become aware that our destiny and the destiny of nature are one and the same. PHILIP SHERRARD 1922-95

I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world. BOB THIELE 1922-96 (MADE FAMOUS BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG)

The chariot of human development has gained momentum but seems to be running amok without a charioteer. We know that consumerism is bad, but what can we do except to go on consuming more and more ? we know that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, but what can we do except live with our guilt and lend an occasional hand to the poor ? PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS 1924-97

Through his spirits God himself is present in his creation. The whole creation is a fabric woven and shot through by the efficacies of the Spirit. JÜRGEN MOLTMANN 1926-

We must work passionately and indefatigably to bridge the gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress. One of the great problems of humankind is that we suffer from a poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR 1929-68

The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation. DESMOND TUTU 1931-

The same God who commanded us to love one another also commands us to work and take care of the garden. Here, humans find that God has delegated to them authority and responsibility to protect and preserve what we do not own, what belongs to God. God did not abdicate ownership. Rather, God appointed a steward, a caretaker. Justice demands that the steward faithfully execute the assigned responsibility. GEORGE D MCKINNEY JR 1931-

Our predicament now, I believe, requires us to learn to read and understand the Bible in the light of Creation (not the other way round). WENDELL BERRY 1934-

In a time of ecological emergency, the church can offer to the world a hope that is rooted in the power of God to bring new life into all that has been created. WESLEY GRANBERG-MICHAELSON 1945-

We cannot be all that God wants us to be without caring about the earth. RICK WARREN 1954-

Biblical Research.....

Overall themes such as healing and justice and redemption – all applied to all of the created order not exclusively to people

GENESIS

Ch1-2: book begins ch1-2 with God the disorder darkness and brings out of it order beauty goodness making a world where life can flourish and he makes creatures called humans (Adam) in his image

which has to do with their role and purpose in God's world

=made to be reflections of character out into the world

=appointed as God's representatives to rule his world on his behalf

=harness all of its potential and care for it and make it a place where even more life can form and flourish

Gods blesses the humans - key word in this book !

he gives them a place (garden) in which they begin starting to build this world

the humans have a choice about how they're going to go about building this world and that choice is

represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

up until now God has provided and defined what is good and what is not good

now God is giving these humans the dignity and the freedom of a choice - will they trust God's definition of good and evil or will they seize autonomy and define good and evil for themselves

Ch12: God's promise to Abram opens up a whole new movement in the story as God calls Abram to leave his home and to go to the land of Canaan which God says will become his one day

in that land God promises to make Abraham into a great nation to make his name great and to bless him

key themes - **land** nation name blessing

ISAIAH

Ch65-66: God says he will bring his justice on all who polite his good world with their evil and selfishness and idolatry and will remove them from his city for ever

God says the servants those who are humbled before God who repent and own their evil they are forgiven and they will inherit the new Jerusalem which is an image for an entirely renewed creation where death and suffering are gone for ever

Ch66: the book ends with the very grand vision of the fulfillment of all of God's promises through the suffering servant king God creates a covenant family of all nations who are awaiting the hope of God's justice and bringing in **renewed creation** and for God's kingdom to finally to come here on earth as it is in heaven.

EZEKIEL

Ch47-48: vision of E is truly cosmic because God's plan has always been to **restore** all humanity and **all creation** through his life giving presence

also recreated is the allocation of the land to the twelve tribes of Israel

book ends with the name of this new garden-city 'the Lord is there'

ZECHARIAH

Ch14: final chapter - new Jerusalem as gathering point for all the nations and the city becomes a new garden of Eden and the river is flowing out of the city and temple and there is life everywhere and **bringing healing to all of creation**