

❖ Other Voices ❖

Environmental issues challenge theological traditions in ways unprecedented by debates over Christian attitudes toward war or sexuality or poverty. For environmental issues present moral problems that escape the received frameworks of theological ethics. Species loss and degraded biodiversity obviously arrest our moral attention, but how do they matter for Christian life? New technological capacities seem to exercise transgressive control over organisms, but what part of the Christian story offers approval or critique? Globalizing capitalism changes everything from agriculture to local economies, but how is it measured by theological wisdom? In an urbanizing world, the need for sustainable planning, housing, and energy use calls for imaginative new political forms, but how are they intelligible to Christian communities? Climate change places new dimensions of society in moral jeopardy, but how is that preachable on Sunday mornings?

WILLIS J. JENKINS, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology (2008)*

...if positive Christian warrants for environmental care are to be found, substantial critical work has to be done. As I seek to show, some of this work will be biblical-exegetical, asking: what do these texts mean? Some of the work will be theological-hermeneutical, asking: how might we read these texts reasonably today in ways which accord with and display the Christian gospel? Some of the work will be personal-ascetical, asking: what performances of Scripture do we as Christians need to master, what processes of formation do we need to enhance, that will predispose us towards true discernment and right action for the common good, including the good of creation?

STEPHEN C. BARTON, *“New Testament Eschatology and the Ecological Crisis in Theological and Ecclesial Perspective” (2010)*

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
 Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
 Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
 Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
 Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

Í say more: the just man justices;
 Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
 Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
 Chríst. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
 To the Father through the features of men's faces.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844 - 1889)

The notion of God, which most adequately, comprehensively, and dynamically gathers up the vast biblical witness, is very close to John Calvin's statement, "The God who is the Fountain of all livingness." It has never occurred to me that my understanding of God should be threatened by galaxies or by light years. A new precision about the structure of the physical universe is not in fact disintegrative of a biblical understanding of God, but rather tends to be illustrative of it. I have never been able to entertain a God-idea which was not integrally related to the fact of chipmunks, squirrels, hippopotamuses, galaxies, and light years!

JOSEPH SITTLER, "Ecological Commitment as Theological Responsibility" (1970)

Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with God's creation are not alternatives but natural partners. In the end they are inseparable, as John's vision [of the New Jerusalem] shows, and in the crises of our contemporary world both are urgent needs. The Church's "ministry of reconciliation" today must surely embrace both.

RICHARD BAUCKHAM, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (2010)

So I asked myself, *What, if anything, does the Bible have to say about caring for the earth?* Using an orange pencil (I wish it had been green), I read the Bible from cover to cover, underlining everything that had to do with nature, God's revealing himself through creation, and stewardship of the earth. What I ended up with was an underlined Bible.

J. MATTHEW SLEETH, MD, *The Gospel According to the Earth: Why the Good Book Is a Green Book* (2010)

In a 2008 Barna Institute poll in the United States, 78 percent of Christians indicated that they wanted to see Christians take a more active role in caring for creation. Among evangelicals, the proportion was 90 percent. Tom Rowley, Director of A Rocha USA, took these results a step further, asking A Rocha USA members, "What keeps you from becoming more involved in creation care?" The largest group of respondents, 37 percent, cited a lack of opportunity, and the second largest group (30 percent) indicated a lack of knowledge of appropriate actions to take.

FRED VAN DYKE, *Between Heaven and Earth* (2010)