
Scriptural Foundations and Theological Implications: our response to climate change/global warming*

- “Creation has value in itself”
- “Creation has value because it reveals God”
- “Human Beings are dependent but responsible”
- “Creation reveals human sin”
- “Creation participates in our redemption”
- “Creation in the world to come”



“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.”
Colossians, 1:15 –20



¹ “Climate Change: Our Responsibility to Sustain God’s Earth,” 2005 Bishops Committee for Justice Development, Ecology and Peace, Catholic Earthcare Australia
*From “The Call of Creation: God’s Invitation and the Human Response,” 2002 The Catholic Church in England and Wales, and “Southwell Lectures 2007 – Response to climate change – theological implications,” by Rev. Canon Donald MacDonald, Bishop of Derby’s Office of Environmental Affairs

“I don’t think it is compatible with a Christian ethic to ignore the environmental degradation we face; it is . . . a moral question for everyone and therefore a present imperative.”

“[I]f we look at the language of the Bible on this, we come across a situation where people are judged for not responding to warnings. It is deeply built in; there are choices we can make, each one of us, to change things now and I think what the Bible and the Christian tradition suggests is that those who have that challenge put before them, but not only the challenge, but the evidence for it, and don’t respond, bear a very heavy responsibility before God.” Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, Church of England



“One cannot dissociate the plan of Creation from the plan of Redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be combated and of justice to be restored.” Pope Paul VI



“Every major religion has a moral mandate to take care of the Earth. For those who look to the Bible for instruction, it is the first responsibility given to man: ‘The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep [protect] it’ (Gen: 2:15, NASB). Our moral obligation, then, does not depend on the rate our planet is warming, or even whether the main cause is human activity. We are to refrain from harming God’s creation – period. . . .

Our faith has to do with obeying God and loving our neighbor. . . . Creation care is important to many Biblical themes we need to address, including sanctity of life, disease, poverty, and conflict. Some conservative Christians have been reluctant to get involved with creation care because they think it belies some sort of failure of belief that God is going to take care of us. Of course those same Christians don’t expect God to change their baby’s dirty diaper (pray all you want, it’s still your job). Caring for the Earth is not a lack of faith; it is an act of faith. Faith guides us to do what is good for others, knowing that the results are ultimately up to God.” Joel Hunter, Evangelical, *A call to all to care for creation* (Christian Science Monitor, February 8, 2007)

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Climate Stewardship: The Biblical Basis of Caring for Creation

“God looked at everything God had made and found it very good.” Gen 1:31

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” Ps 24:1

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Mt 22: 34-40

“Truly I tell you, just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me. . . . Truly I tell you, just as you did not do to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did not do to me.” Mt. 25:40,45

Our engagement in stewardship of creation is a sign of our love and respect for God’s creation, human and nonhuman, and a demonstration of our responsibility to all who come after us. As we work together in reverence and love to protect and sustain God’s sacred handiwork¹, let us open our hearts and minds as God continues to call and inspire us.

In partnership with
The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
Environmental Stewardship Committee;
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From Rediscovering moral and scriptural foundations*

Creation has value in itself

"We believe that God is the Creator of everything there is and that this creation is good, reflecting God's own goodness (Genesis 1-2). God loves creation for its own sake, and God's love holds everything in existence for its own mysterious purpose (Psalms 104:29-30). Creation has its own relationship with God, in some measure independently of humankind and beyond human understanding: it glorifies and worships God in continuous praise (Psalms 96:12; Isaiah 55:12). Our destructiveness can silence creation's song of praise to God, our care for creation can be a true expression of our own praise.

Creation has value because it reveals God

"The Creator's 'eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made' (Romans 1:20). Nature reveals God to us and allows us to experience God's presence.

"When we allow creation to be degraded and damaged, therefore, we lose our sense of God's very self.

"Jesus points to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air as beautiful in their own right ('Not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these') but also as revealing the care of God for all beings (Matthew 6: 26-30), a care that can liberate us from the kind of anxiety that deflects us from seeking God's kingdom first. His authority over the immense power of the sea awes the disciples who experience it, because it is only God who has sovereignty over the forces of Creation.

Human Beings are dependent but responsible

"Human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and have the special gift and challenge of sharing in God's creative activity. We use, and by using we transform, the natural world. As 'co-creators', then, our acts should reflect God's own love for creation. We ourselves are part of creation, formed out of the earth, and dependent on the rest of creation for our continued existence: so we are made aware that caring for creation is part of caring for ourselves (Genesis 2:15). There is a covenant of mutual care and respect that unites God, humankind and every other living creature (Genesis 9)."

"This . . . Creation Covenant in Genesis 9[:8-17] . . . is at the heart of the Biblical understanding of the deep structure of the world. . . . God is pictured binding together all living beings, and the earth itself into a web of interrelatedness. The Biblical tradition asserts that the effects of this covenant are empirically verifiable in the interdependence of the natural order that God created in a state of 'shalom.' . . . [T]his word, usually translated 'peace', also incorporates ideas of harmony, justice and integrity."*

Creation reveals human sin

"Our capacity to marvel at the earth, but also to develop and utilise its resources (for instance through the application of science and technology), has greatly enriched our lives. This human creativity carries with it a profound responsibility. However, it is also part of Christian faith to recognise that we are sinners: in our present context, this truth means that sin has distorted the human relationship with the natural world: we have disturbed the balance of nature in radical and violent ways.

"Sin damages our relationships with God and with one another, the relationships between social groups, and that between humanity and the earth. As the prophets of the Old Testament testify, such sin is reflected in the earth's suffering: 'The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant' (Isaiah 24:4-5). 'Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together

with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing' (Hosea 4:2-3).

Creation participates in our redemption

"We live out our relationship with God as dwellers on the earth. Our use of the gifts of creation forms part of that relationship. To love God is, among other things, to give thanks and praise for these gifts, to honour and respect them for themselves, to acknowledge that they are destined by God for all people, and therefore to share the gifts of the earth justly. . . . It is partly in this sense that St Paul daringly argues that the earth itself shares in our redemption and salvation. 'Therefore creation too waits with eager longing...that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom and the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now' (Romans 8:19 seq).

Creation in the world to come

"Our present life already participates in the life to come. Jesus says, 'The Kingdom of God is among you' (Luke 17: 21), and we have been given the vision of the new heavens and the new earth as an inspiration for the present as well as a sign of hope for the future. We are partners in God's creative enterprise, called to 'renew the face of the earth' until there is peace and harmony, sparkling life-giving water, the 'trees of life' that give health and the messianic banquet that can be shared by all the inhabitants of the earth. Then 'the curse of destruction will be abolished' (Revelation 22: 1-3)."



PCSN invites you to respond to global warming by engaging in climate stewardship and joining our network. Do so by entering a covenant. Take advantage of opportunities to support renewable energy and practice energy conservation. Visit our website at www.prairiestewardship.org or contact us at 701-647-2532.



* "*The Call of Creation: God's Invitation and the Human Response*" and **"Southwell Lectures 2007 – *Response to climate change – theological implications*"