

H oly S aviour Parish

S unday 25th J uly 2010

Stewardship of Creation - Becoming a Green Parish



Heal the World
Awareness, Caring, Action.

Theme for J uly-R ecycle



Reading the Bible through Green Lens

Calvin B. DeWitt



Biblical Principles for Creation Care

- *The Earth Keeping Principle*
- *The Fruitfulness Principle*
- *The Sabbath Principle*
- *The Discipleship Principle*
- *The Kingdom Priority Principle*
- *The Contentment Principle*
- *The Praxis Principle*
- *The Conservation Principle*

We have covered the first six Biblical Principles for Creation Care in the months of May and June, today we continue with *the Praxis Principle and the Conservation Principle*

The Praxis Principle

We must practice what we believe.

Scripture admonishes us to act on what is right. Merely knowing God's requirements for stewardship is not enough. Merely believing in God is not enough, for Scripture tells us that even demons believe in God (James 2:19). We must practice God's requirements, or they do no good.



The failure of God's people to act on what they know is right is well-documented — and challenged — in the pages of Scripture:

They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their hearts are set on their gain. To them you are like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it. (Ezekiel 33:31-32)

Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I tell you? (Luke 6:46)

Studying the bible to learn God's requirements for creation care brings us directly to the question, *Now what must we do?* The challenge before us now is to move forward and put what we know and believe into practice.



*Are you a good steward of God's creation.
Heal the World
Be Aware, Care and Act!*

The Conservation Principle

We must return creation's service to us with service of our own.

This principle encircles all the others. The root meaning of the word *conserve* is *con* + *serve*, which means 'to serve with'.

As we consider the earth keeping principle, we noted from Genesis 2:2-15, that Adam was expected to *serve* the creation and *keep* it. The Hebrew word '*abad* ('*serve*') in this passage occurs 290 times in the Old Testament, and it is most often translated as 'serve' - as in Joshua 24:15; "choose this day who you will serve... as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." The various Bible translations of '*abad* in Genesis 2:15—'Serve,' 'till,' 'dress' and 'work' - relate to worthy service. God calls us to give the garden of creation our caring service.

We already know from experience that this garden serves us. It serves us with good food, beauty, herbs, fiber, medicine, pleasant microclimates, continual soil making, nutrient processing, and seed production. The garden and the larger biosphere provide what ecologists call "ecosystem service" such as water purification by evaporation and percolation, moderation of flood peaks and drought flows by river-system wetlands, development of soil from the weathering of rocks, and moderation of nearby climates by local bodies of water. Yet Genesis addresses *our* service to the garden. The garden's service *to us* is implicit; service *from us* to the garden is explicit.

Like Adam, we are expected to return the service of the garden with service of our own. This is a reciprocal service, a "service with." This reciprocal service defines an engaging relationship between the garden and the gardener, between the biosphere and its safeguarding stewards.

So we can call this “never taking from creation without returning service of our own.” Our love of our Creator God, God’s love of the creation, and our imaging this love of God, - all join together to commission us as *con-servers* of creation. As *conservers*, we follow the example of second Adam –Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45).



Reading the Bible through Green Lens
Calvin B. DeWitt

GREEN BY GRACE
A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE GENERAL
SYNOD 2004

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
The world and all who live in it
Ps 24.1 (NIV)*

And we as God's people must care for the earth and all that is in it. We must be neighbours to all people, and act as brothers and sisters in Christ to one another.

Environmental degradation is not simply a scientific or political issue. Greed and exploitation have accompanied and often overshadowed beneficial economic development. Unjust political and social structures have led to displacement of people and to poverty. Over-consumption of resources such as forest clearing or overgrazing has resulted as people struggle to survive. Transformation to wise and sustainable use of the environment is at heart a spiritual matter. Environmental concern is a legitimate and necessary part of a Christian's response to God's loving provision for us.

**We come together as a community of faith.
Creation calls us, our vocation as
God's redeemed drives us, the Spirit in our midst
enlivens us, scripture compels
us.**

Heal the World—Awareness, Caring, Action.

So argues the declaration to the Anglican Communion of the 2002 Global Congress on the Stewardship of Creation, held in South Africa in association with UN World Summit on Sustainable Development. Particularly since the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the environment has been on the Anglican agenda. The 5 Marks of Mission of the world-wide Anglican Communion are to:

- proclaim the gospel
- nurture and baptise new believers
- care for those in need
- address unjust structures
- **strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.**

Obviously it is not only Christians, let alone only Anglicans, who see care for the environment as a religious duty. Most religious traditions accept that the created world belongs to God and that people are its caretakers. They value life and people above possessions. What then is the specifically Christian approach to these issues?



CREATION

*In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth.
.. And God saw that it was good.
..So God created man in his own image,
..male and female he created them.
Genesis 1.1,25,27 (NIV)*

The created universe, and our world within it, are intrinsically, wonderfully good. All space, all matter, all life, all time are the creation of God. Only human beings are created in God's image. We are therefore special, but we are part of the whole creation, and we are not equal with God. Sometimes we see much of creation as separate, and created simply for the good of people. Our indigenous brothers and sisters do not do so - for them, the earth is mother, and places, animals, plants have deep spiritual significance and sacredness.

CARE AND BLESSING, NOT DOMINATION OR EXPLOITATION

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every creature that moves on the ground'. Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant .. and every tree that has fruit with seed in it

..They will be yours for food. And .. to everything that has the breath of life in it - I give every green plant for food'.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 1:28-30 2:15 (NIV)

The early verses of Genesis have often been used to argue that human beings have God's authority to dominate and exploit the earth. Lynn White in his much quoted article 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' published in the journal *Science* in 1967 stated that:

- *Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. ..*
- *Christianity .. not only established a dualism of man and nature but also*
- *insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.*

Unfortunately, this charge sometimes can seem justified. However, it should not be so. In fact White's statements do not reflect orthodox Christian teaching. God placed Adam in the garden of Eden to 'work it and take care of it', not to exploit and damage it. God gives people the responsibility to care for all living beings, and the invitation (in Genesis 2:19-20) to name them confirms this. Psalm 19 tells us that the creation declares the glory of God - how could it be proper for us to misuse the earth or even to see it merely as useful for us? Not only nature but also developed land has to be cared for; note, for example, the command to grant a sabbath year to the croplands and vineyards (Leviticus 25:2-7).

In the bible, blessing has to do with people and their environment functioning as God intends. Thus often blessing is spoken of in terms of good rains, and abundant crops and flocks. When the ground is 'cursed', God is deliberately pronouncing that the creation order and perfection has been violated. It is clear that blessing for all creation depends on God's people following God's ways. It is our responsibility to avoid sin and bring blessing.

*Green by Grace
A Report Prepared For the General Synod 2004*

Unscramble

1. SAHTR _____
2. RHTAE _____
3. YCEELCR _____
4. AENCL _____
5. URCEED _____
6. EPPRA _____
7. NCSA _____
8. UERES _____
9. UTENAR _____
10. NTMNIENEVOR _____
11. ULTELPO _____
12. IRELTT _____
13. AESV _____
14. TSEWA _____

Abcteach © not to be sold



1. Trash 2. Earth 3. Recycle 4. Clean 5. Reduce 6. Paper 7. Cans
8. Reuse 9. Nature 10. Environment 11. Pollute 12. Litter 13. Save 14. Waste