

The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Trinidad & Tobago

Holy Saviour Parish

Sunday 23rd May 2010

Day of Pentecost

World Turtle Day

Stewardship of Creation - Becoming a Green Parish



Heal the World
Awareness, Caring, Action.

Theme for May-Reuse



Reading the Bible through Green Lens

Calvin B. DeWitt



Biblical Principles for Creation Care

Keeping in mind that many people today yearn to restore the integrity of creation, it can be helpful to read the Scriptures afresh, searching for their ecological insights on how rightly to live on the earth. The following eight biblical principles will help disclose the Bible's powerful environmental message.

- *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*

The Earth Keeping Principle

As the Lord keeps and sustains us, so must we keep and sustain our Lord's creation.

Genesis 2:15 conveys a marvellous teaching. Adam is expected by God to *serve* the garden and to *keep* the garden. The word for *keep* (*shamar*) is sometimes translated 'guard,' 'safeguard,' 'take care of,' or 'look after.' *Shamar* indicates a loving, caring, sustaining kind of keeping. In the blessing of Aaron in Numbers 6:24, 'The LORD bless you and keep you,'. When we invoke God's

blessing to *keep* us, we are not asking that God would keep us in a kind of preserved, inactive state. Instead, we are calling on God to keep us in all of our vitality, with all our energy and beauty. The keeping we expect of God when we invoke this ancient blessing is one that nurtures all of our life-fulfilling relationships—with family, neighbours, and friends; with the land, air, and water of the earth; and of course with God.

So too with our keeping of God's creation. Our relationship to creation must be a loving, caring, keeping relationship. When we fulfill God's mandate to *keep* the creation, we make sure that the creatures and other living things under our care are maintained so that they can flourish. They must remain connected with members of the same species, with the many other species with which they interact, and with the soil, air, and water they depend on.

As God *keeps* people, so God's people should *keep* his creation.



The Fruitfulness Principle

We should enjoy but not destroy creation's fruitfulness.

God's blessing of fruitfulness is for the whole creation. In Genesis, God declares, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky' (1:20). And God bless these creatures with fruitfulness: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth' (1:22). God also says, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind' (1:24).

God's creation reflects God's fruitful work, giving to land and life what satisfies and sustains it. Psalm 104:10-13 expresses this beautifully:

You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

As God's Fruitful work brings fruit to creation, so should ours. As God provides for all his creatures, so should we who are created to reflect God's image. As Noah cared for God's creatures when they were threatened with extinction, so should we. In Noah's time a flood of water covered the land. In our time floods of people in many places sprawl across the land, often displacing God's other creatures, limiting *their* potential to fulfill their blessing and God's command to be fruitful. To those who would allow a human flood across the land at the expense of all other creatures, the prophet Isaiah warns, 'Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land' (5:8).

So although we are expected to enjoy creation and its many fruits, we may not destroy the *fruitfulness* that creation's fullness depends on. Like Noah, we must preserve and care for God's many species whose interactions and relationships with each other and with land and water make up the fabric of the biosphere. We must let the profound admonition of Ezekiel 34:18 echo in our minds: 'Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet?'



The Sabbath Principle

We must provide for creation's Sabbath rests.

In Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, God commands us to set aside one day in seven as a day of rest for people and for animals. This Sabbath day is given to help us all get 'off the treadmill,' to protect us all from the hazards of continuous work, to help us pull our lives together again. It's a time to worship the Lord and enjoy the fruits of creation, a time for rest and restoration. In Exodus 23:12, God commands, 'Six days you shall do work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.'

The same chapter says that the land also must have its time of Sabbath rest. Nothing in all creation must be relentlessly pressed. 'For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your

olive orchard' (Exodus 23:10-11)

Does this command create a problem for people? Leviticus 25:20-21 says, 'should you ask, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?' God's answer: 'I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years.'

God was instructing people not to worry, but to practice his law so that the land would be *fruitful*. 'If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit' (Leviticus 26:3-4).

In the New Testament, Jesus clearly defines for us the meaning for Sabbath in our lives: the Sabbath is made for those who are served by it—not the other way around (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is made for people and, through them, for all the rest of God's creation. The Sabbath year is given to protect the land from relentless exploitation, to help it rejuvenate, to give it a time of rest and restoration.

This Sabbath is not merely a legalistic requirement, it's a profound principle. That's why in some farming communities the land is allowed to rest every *second* year, because that is what it needs. The Sabbath is made for the land—not the land for the Sabbath. The Sabbath law is therefore not restricted to agriculture but applies to all of creation. It affects our use of water and air, as we discharge our exhaust, smoke, sewage, and other things we 'throw away.' God speaks strongly on this issue:

But if you will not obey me, and do not observe these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances... and you brake my covenant... your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste. Then the land shall enjoy it's Sabbath years as long as it lies desolate... it shall have the rest it did not have on your Sabbath when you were living on it. (Leviticus 24:14-15, 33-35)

These are hard words from the Holy Creator who is concerned for his creation. But God's promises of blessings are equally powerful to all who will listen.





CLIMATE CHANGE – NOT JUST A GREEN ISSUE

A MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS BRIEFING PAPER

Climate change is not just a green issue. It is also a security concern.

This was the conclusion of Air Chief Marshall Sir John Stirrup, the Chief of the Defense Staff, when he addressed The Royal United Services Institute, in December 2006. He noted: “Climate change and growing competition for scarce resources are together likely to increase the incidence of humanitarian crises. The spread of desert regions, a scarcity of water, coastal erosion, declining arable land, damage to infrastructure from extreme weather; all this could undermine security. The areas most at risk – the Middle East, South Asia, and the Sahara belt – are already prone to instability; and they are strategically important to the UK. So we will need to act where we can to prevent such crises developing. But we will also have to consider our response, should prevention fail.”

This briefing paper explores climate change as a security issue. It examines how climate change affects a range of policy issues (food, health, water energy and infrastructure), all of which have an impact on migration and conflict. It analyses how this new security agenda is influencing policy debates and subsequent efforts to secure an international agreement on climate change. It concludes by looking at the implications of this debate for how the Church approaches the issue of climate change. It asks whether the Church needs to concentrate more resources on the social justice and security concerns of many of its partners and members from across the Anglican Communion.

Climate Security – a New Strategic Priority

No one now seriously disputes the overwhelming scientific evidence that suggests that climate change is a serious global threat, which demands an urgent global response. **What is new is that governments are increasingly treating climate change as a security threat.** As John Ashton, the UK’s climate change envoy observed: “If the first priority of any government is to provide for the welfare of its citizens in return for the taxes that citizens pay,

then climate change is potentially the most serious threat to this most fundamental of social contracts.”

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina to the city of New Orleans in August 2005 underlines how even in a country as wealthy and resilient as the US, the social and economic dislocation caused by such a climatic catastrophe can place huge strains on a government’s ability to provide for its citizens. The economic and security impacts of extreme climatic events in more vulnerable regions such as Africa and South Asia, or more strategically important regions, like the Middle East may be even more dramatic. Given the nature of our interdependent world, the impact of extreme climatic events will be felt not just in the immediate region affected, but also across the international community.

Seen from this perspective, climate change is not just a long-term threat to the environment; it is an immediate threat to human security and prosperity with a fundamental impact across a range of national and international policy areas. Although the impact of climate change might vary from region to region, climate security holds that human kind is dependent on the same complex and fragile web of natural processes that, if pressed beyond a certain point, will be irrevocably compromised by a changing climate.

The new language of climate security recognizes that securing a stable climate is a global public good that is essential for all human security and development.

Governments are slowly, but surely, responding to this wider agenda. In June 2006 the Foreign Secretary announced that “achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy” was now a strategic priority for the British government in general and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in particular. To achieve climate security the government holds that it is necessary to: 1) bring about a change in global investment in low carbon technologies to enable a move to a low carbon economy including establishing an effective carbon market which allows companies to trade carbon credits; 2) make strategies adaptable so they can manage impacts and adapt to climate change and 3) secure international agreement to a realistic, strong, lasting and fair framework of commitments to reduce carbon emissions beyond 2012.



Subsequent speeches by the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and the International Development Secretary have increasingly framed climate change in the language of security.

In doing so, they hope to build a stronger political foundation for international action on climate change. By presenting climate change as a security issue rather than just an environmental or 'green' concern, the government hopes that the international community will place the issue at the centre of every aspect of international policy.

The previous Foreign Secretary, Margaret Becket, in the Annual Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture, April 2007, expanded on the government's thinking on climate security. She stated: "The trap to be wary of here is seeing this (i.e. climate change) as just an environmental problem: a 'green issue'. Don't misunderstand me: the potential effects on our biodiversity from climate change range, under different scenarios, from serious to catastrophic. And the image of polar bears on melting glaciers is a simple one that has had a role in raising awareness and drumming up public support. But the, perhaps rather sad, truth is that the international community will not move with the necessary urgency or the necessary resolve if climate change is seen as primarily something that affects insects, animals and plants: although they may in turn hold the key to our own survival. To steal a slogan from Amnesty International, **we need to show that tackling climate change is about saving the human.**" (to be continued)

*Presented by Dr. Charles Reed
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