

5 RIGHT RELATIONS

Live in right relations within the community of creation.



Heaven, Earth, God: Each part “stand(s) in its own difference, but encompassed by a wider whole that affects their interrelatedness.”¹ No part is complete except as part of the whole, and the whole “transcends yet includes”² the parts. We engage spiritually in an emerging universe as a part within an interconnected whole. We are part of the mutual engagement of the parts with one another and with the whole.

Key Concepts

- We acknowledge negative human impacts on the community of life and identify that it comes from hierarchical dualism which separates matter/spirit, mind/body, male/female.
- New paradigm—from dominion to communion; humans are distinctive not necessarily superior.
- Communion locates whole Earth community within the embrace of God, Ground of all being, who is drawing all forth to fullness of life. The wider world has its own relationship to God.
- Called to ecological conversion : Vision of “a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet, rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God” (Johnson, E “From Pyramid to Circle”, 479)
- Part of one of the greatest love stories ever told.

¹ Elizabeth A Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 269

² Carter Phipps, *Evolutionaries, Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science’s Greatest Idea* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 191. Phipps acknowledges Hegel’s recognition of this pattern of “transcending and including” as a universal principle of evolutionary emergence.

For Discussion

What does it mean for us to move from dominion to communion?

View *Earthrise*, Amanda Gorman, 4 mins 28 secs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOvBv8RLmo>

RESOURCES FOR PRINCIPLE 5

For Meditation

“The theological construct of the community of creation is founded on the belief that “all beings are in fact creatures, sustained in life by the Creator of all that is.” This is the case for humankind and other species, and this commonality before God is stronger than their differences. In their kinship all are “grounded in absolute, universal reliance on the living God for the breath of life.”³ This pattern of relationship, which locates us humans alongside other creatures and stresses interconnectedness without blurring differences, gives a new impetus for ethical behaviour based in that new relationality with one another and the wider whole which can supercede notions of dominion. “

Commentary on Job chapters 38-41. Job has come upon hard times, and his friends argue that he must have sinned. Job maintains his innocence, but his suffering is very real. Eventually God speaks to him out of the whirlwind, and asks “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the Earth?” (Job 38, 4) The questions go on and on as God draws attention to the scope of the physical world and the qualities of the wild yet free animals and the fearsome beasts. These creations are a far cry from anything which has been subject to human dominion, yet they are revelatory.

Johnson draws out three points from commentaries on the book of Job. Firstly, its preoccupation is with the meaning of suffering, and in this case the suffering of a good person. Its conclusion on that subject is that ultimately it is a mystery to be respected. Secondly, God rebukes Job’s friends who want to insist that Job’s suffering is sent from God as punishment for sin. These chapters, however, are brimming with wonder and power, and Job shifts his position: “I had heard you by the ear but now my eye sees you” (Job 42, 5). Finally, Johnson sees this passage as modelling a relationship of humans with God and the rest of creation. Far from seeing human dominion, “Job is led to see divine activity in the awesome, independent working of the natural world over which he has no mastery, not only technologically but also theologically.”⁴ The creatures have their own value, and in observing them Job finds Wisdom, and a recognition of his own place within what Johnson calls the community of creation. Our assumptions of human superiority are seriously challenged by this narrative. There can be a very positive outcome if “humbled and delighted by the other life around us, we can grow to know ourselves as members of the community of creation and step up to protect our kin.”⁵

³ Ibid., 268 is the source of the above quotes.

⁴ Ibid., 272

⁵ Ibid., 273

2 For Listening and Viewing



Enfolded with Affection: Imagining "Us" in Creation Theology

with
Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dw68LT3NRs&t=350s>



SUNSET RITUAL

Leader: *Quiet my soul in your silent Presence
Gentle my soul in your stillness and peace
Tender my soul in your beauty and grace
God of this moment, here in this place.*

Reader

Luminous One, you breathed love into the whole cosmos at its birthing
And your love will be with us as we breathe our last.
You are our steady Flame of love.

All *Holy One, O Holy One, dwelling within us
Holy One, O Holy One, dwelling within us*

Reader

Purifying Light, your refining fire transforms us
As the whole community of creation experiences life's sorrow, pain and discouragement...

All: Holy One, etc

Reader

Blazing Love, the radiant glow of your compassion fills us
With new awareness, kindness and understanding.

All Holy One etc,

Silence as we observe the setting of the sun or at least the approach of the setting sun.

Reader From the words of Teilhard De Chardin

In the beginning was power, intelligent, loving, energizing.

In the beginning was the word, supremely capable of mastering and holding

Whatever might come into being the world of matter.

In the beginning there were not coldness and darkness:

There was the fire.

The creative operation of God

Does not simply mold us like soft clay.

It is a Fire that animates all that it touches,

A spirit that gives life.

So it is in living

That we should give ourselves to that creative action, imitate it, and identify with it.

For this we give thanks.

Leader

In your Presence, O God of Love, we reflect on our experience together as an ending and a beginning

- How has my life been changed this week?
- How have my words and actions this day and other days caused disconnectedness from the Living Cosmos?
- To what action does my encounter urge me?

Reader

Safeguard your creation in the sanctuary of your love, O Great God;

Shelter it now and all that dwells within it. Be its protection.

God, to enfold it

God, to surround it

God, in its watching

God, in its hoping

God, in its sleeping

God, in its ever-living being.

Reader

Enflame our hearts, O God of love,

May we be your light of love.

Enflame our hearts, O God of love,

Let your love burn deep in us.

Blessing said by all

May the grace of the love of the stars be yours

May the grace of the love of the moon be yours.

May the grace of the love of God be yours

In the name of the Word of all life and the ever present Spirit, Amen.