

# Loving God Means Loving the Earth

Three times the biblical Peter denied  
even knowing his mentor.  
Hundreds of times Senator Inhofe denied global  
warming.  
“It’s a hoax,” says he.  
Peter feared a fickle population and  
the chance of joining Jesus in being tortured to death.  
The Oklahoma Senator fears fickle voters and  
the loss of campaign cash from the fossil-fuel  
establishment.

Loving God means  
Trusting the Final Reality to be doing all things well.  
So denying the climate crisis mean denying  
the scientific facts  
about God’s doings—  
denying responsibility for the stronger winds  
in tornado alley,  
for the fiercer droughts and fires in Western places,  
for the wilder oceans in New York City subways.  
And these clearly undeniable facts  
are only the beginning.

As Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets slide into the  
oceans,  
entire Pacific islands disappear beneath the brine,  
along with coastlands in Florida and Bangladesh.  
Let us weep again for New Orleans.  
Yes, even a few Texans know  
that it is not wise to mess  
with Mother Nature.

The poetry of prophetic ethics for Century 21 includes recognizing that loving God means loving planet Earth and all that takes place on this planet and all that fails to take place. Loving God means loving the plain truth of things, loving that human choices matter—that human choices play a role in historical outcomes. The human actions that have derived from our addiction to the great benefits of the fossil fuel enhancements have played a role in Earth-life consequences. Our future actions as a species can play a role in moderating these consequences, perhaps significantly extending the life of our species and other Earth species.

Often missing from ecological conversation is an understanding that the familiar symbol “Mother Nature” is one of the masks of God, the God of the prophets, the devotion of all these ancient Hebrew luminaries, the devotion of Jesus, of Paul, and yes of Mohammed. Loving the Earth is part of loving the Mysterious Source of this Earth. Yes, Biblical creation is just a story—a story, a myth taking place in a fictitious other realm where a humanoid-like Figure calls for the coming into being of all coming into being. This old story is a story—a story about the Mysterious truth of our being here on Earth. This story claims that our earthly being here is derived from a Final Source that does all things well. “It is good,” God cries out in this old story, “it is all very good.” This cry from the Mystery-of-it-All is still a faith to live by—a “God” that can be our prime devotion.

Loving this good Earth is part of loving God, the God of biblical lore. If we are not devoted to this planet, we are not devoted to this God. This is a clear axiom for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim ethical thought, as well as for most ethical thought everywhere. “Global warming,” “climate crisis” (or by whatever name) is a realistic

challenge to the human species—an encounter with that Final Reality revered as Divine by the true prophets of every age.

And global warming is not the only challenge being faced when we comprehensively face loving this Earth-and-Earth's-Ultimate-Source. Our reckless species has acquired the power to wreak havoc, and has succumbed to the thoughtless greed of polluting for quick benefits the rivers, the oceans, the air, the soils, the diversity of life of this one inhabitable planet within our reach. This thoughtless addiction to recklessness seems to respect no bounds. And this partly naive, partly intentional recklessness builds hatred toward any democratic movement that might issue in the responsible governance of our excesses.

Furthermore, these hate-Earth attitudes manifest as hatred toward the severely impoverished and the middle classes—fearing that they might awaken to their mistreatment and take charge of enough governing power to change things. This defensive opposition to the needed changes has even corrupted public and university education into a fight against, instead of for, the truth. It has underfunded public education lest too many poorer people become too wise about the hateful scams that oppress them. This same hatred of the truth has over-policed and filled the jails with those who are unlikely to vote for the status quo of unrestrained destruction. However unconscious these measures are, the root malady is a lack of love for humanity, for Earth, and for Reality as a Whole.

A powerful symbol known to Jesus and his first-century listeners was the wide-spread rulership of “*Satan’s Liars’ Kingdom.*” This strange symbol has the power to

interpret life in the 21st century as well. This grim vision of our human condition provides us with the foil we need to understanding Jesus' announcement of a now arriving and still coming "Kingdom of God." We can view this Kingdom of God as the Reign of Reality—as a rebirth of love for the Earth and for that Mysterious Final Power we can revere as the Earth's Creator. This "Kingdom of God" is not an escape from Earth-life to some non-material existence created by our flawed imagination. Rather, the Kingdom of God is a reign in human affairs that can come here on Earth, as the Gospels clearly say. And this Reign of Final Reality comes on Earth, right here, today and tomorrow, among the living and the dying, the flourishing and the suffering, the human and the inhuman communities of conscious awareness. Our estrangement from the Real, our despair over our real lives (in a word, our "sin") is vast beyond our comprehension. But our deep essence of trust in the Final Reality, our liberation from self-image limitations, and our compassion for all things is even more vast than our depravity.

The recovery of our true being begins today with a recovery of our material nature, our identification with dirt, air, water, fire—our body, our blood, and our participation in the horrors and glories of history. This fresh *materialism* is very different from the mechanistic materialism fostered by the defunct forms of physics, biology, psychology, and sociology. Our *fresh* materialism sees the enigma of consciousness mysteriously interpenetrating the bodies of living beings and their inescapable relations with the soils, air, waters, flora, fauna, of Earth. This consciousness is boundlessly *wilder* than anything capable of mathematical ordering. This consciousness is a capacity to make choices that have no cause except conscious choice itself.

This *wildness of our essential consciousness* (unthinkable in the older sciences and incomprehensible to any science) is a profoundly deep awareness of a human consciousness that can *look* upon consciousness itself and partly describe this mysterious presence. Like the plain dirt of Earth, consciousness is also part of what we mean by “Earth.” As far as we know, consciousness has appeared on no other planet. And if it has appeared elsewhere, it is only because consciousness is somehow built into the cosmos as a dynamic we are barely beginning to understand. What we can know, if we are willing to look into our own conscious beings, is that we are engaged in a powerful relatedness to this planet and to this planet’s Mysterious Source. This is not a debatable truth held only in somebody’s religious dogma. It is a description of the WAY IT IS, and it is an affirmation of the WAY IT IS. This understanding of the WAY IT IS reveals how a love of the Earth is part of a Godly love of the Final Reality—a love that includes a love of the Earth.

### ***Loving the Earth***

Loving the Earth begins with our sensual awareness of our sights and sounds, tastes and smells, and every feeling of our body—outwardly and inwardly related. This sensual awareness is also an awareness of the sensor, the consciousness that is the aware being that is having the sensations and the awareness of them. Loving the Earth continues with an awareness of our desires, emotions, & thoughts in both their essential and neurotic forms. And all this wondrous psychology of personal awareness reveals only one part of our love of the Earth.

Love of the Earth also includes an awareness and participation in our intimacies—of our consciousness-to-consciousness relations with every living being. We all experience this dynamic, however poorly we understand what consciousness is or what intimacy is.

Still further, love of the Earth includes participation in the essential social processes of human society—those inescapable commonalities of cultural, economic, and political processes. We cannot escape from these ever-present social processes, while at the same time we can be aware of the fragmentary, changing, and corrupted qualities of the current manifestations of these essential processes. And most important of all, we can be aware of our capacities to change these social manifestations.

By “cultural processes” I mean our participation in languages, arts, and religions; our participation in the disciplines of learning, methods of thinking, and fabrics of education; and our participation in the styles of association, moralities, and roles of participation. We are inescapably Earthlings participating in a set of cultural processes.

By “economic processes” I mean all the ways we turn sunlight and other Earth gifts into useful goods and services. Economic processes include all the resources of this planet, its humans, and their skills. Economic processes include the production from Earth gifts into humanly useful products and services. And economic processes include the distribution among humans of these produced products and services.

By “political processes” I mean all the ways we make group decisions about anything and everything—the

geographical designs, the social ordering, the administration of justice and well being.

All these essential social processes have been corrupted in their existing manifestations by our various estrangements from Reality. But this estrangement does not undo the fact that these essential social processes are an unavoidable gift of our Creator. And this inexhaustible Source is also giving us the wherewithal to improve, repair, and replace any and all manifest forms of these social essentials.

Loving the Earth is loving our lives as Earthlings and loving all other Earthlings along with ourselves. It is a complex thing to love the Earth; it violates all the rules. It constantly makes better rules; it exceeds living by human rules. At the same time loving the Earth has respect for rules, it sees how rules can be collected wisdom for the realistic living of our Earth life. Nevertheless, realistic living is too vast a challenge to be entirely captured by any set of human rules. Loving the Earth is a form of ecstasy, of numinous connection with the Final Mysterious Source of this Earth and its attendant sun, moon, planets, and stars. Loving the Earth is *axiom number one* of an adequate ethics for realistic living in Century 21 and beyond.

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