



Forming faithful stewards, Caring for sacred waters

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF EARTH CARE

Excerpted from: *ECOLOGY AND BIBLE –PRINCIPLES for Interpretation*

<http://normanhabel.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Ecology-and-Bible-Principles.pdf>

...the Earth Bible principles were developed largely by the Earth Bible Team in Adelaide [Australia] in consultation with writers in Ecology. They are worded in such a way to facilitate dialogue between biblical scholars and ecologists. The articles in The Earth Bible reflect ways in which various scholars seek to read the text from the perspective of Earth, taking into account one or more of these principles. For a more detailed analysis of these principles see...: *Guiding Ecojustice Principles: Earth Bible Volume 1, Chapter 2.*

1. The Principle of Intrinsic Worth

The universe, the Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.

...the Earth is understood to be valued or 'good' precisely because God has invested the Earth with value. The expression 'and God saw that X was good' in Genesis 1 is often viewed as a formula of divine pronouncement or approbation. This literary critical language is misleading. It is preferable to speak of an event, a divine reaction. When God sees the light (v. 4) or the Earth emerge from the waters (v.10). God reacts to what God sees, and **what God sees is good.** The Earth and the components of the Earth in Genesis 1 are valued as 'good' by God when God discovers them to be so, not because God pronounces them to be so. In Genesis 1, the Earth is 'good' of itself.

>>Are there other biblical passages where the same affirmation of Earth can be retrieved?

2. The Principle of Inter-connectedness

The Earth is a community of inter-connected living things which are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.

One of the most sobering and significant outcomes of the ecological movement is a growing awareness that the Earth is not a controlled or mechanical structure consisting of independent parts governed by the so-called laws of nature. Each species and each member of each species are connected by complex webs of interrelationships. Humans, too, are dependent on the fields, the forests, the trees, the air and the wide diversity of life that inhabits these domains. Humans are an integral part of what has come to be called the 'Earth community'; humans are Earth-bound. All breathing creatures inhale the same air. According to Birch, 'Every molecule of

oxygen in the planet comes from plants. All the oxygen is completely recycled by living organisms every two thousand years' (1993, 18). We breathe today the same air once breathed once recycled by the cedars of Lebanon.

The task before us then, as we read a given text in the light of this principle, is to discern whether a dualistic or hierarchical structure is assumed, or whether traditions can be retrieved which affirm an interconnection and interdependence between the domains of the biological world as well as between this world and human beings. Are there texts which indicate that humans are one with the earth, kin with the animals and an integral part of an integrated earth community?

3. The Principle of Voice

The Earth is a living entity capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.

4. The Principle of Purpose

The universe, the Earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.

5. The Principle of Mutual Custodianship

The Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, the Earth to sustain its balance and diversity.

6. Principle of Resistance

The Earth and its components not only suffer from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.