

Where Heaven and Earth are One

Following “The Way”, Caring for the Planet



Gerard Guiton

A Quaker's Understanding of Earthcare

About the Author

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Earth's crammed with heaven
 And every common bush afire with God.
 But only [they] who see, takes off [their] shoes.
 The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries,
 And daub their natural faces unaware
 More and more, from the first similitude.

—**Elizabeth Barrett-Browning**

We are holy creatures living among other holy creatures
 in a world that is holy.

—**Wendell Berry**

We are called to consider the world as an en-Spirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

—**Earthcare Statement,
 Australian Quakers¹**

¹ Barrett-Browning (1806-61), *Aurora Leigh* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1857), Book VII, p. 304; Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (NY.: Pantheon, 1993), p. 112. Australian Quaker's Earthcare statement (2008) at <<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/friends-statement-earthcare>>.

Summary

The Way (i.e. the Kingdom of God), with its many alternative names, is unconditional and unlimited Love, the One who has always honoured the promise of a positive, adventurous, liberating and fulfilled life for ourselves and all Nature.

Also called the Eternal, it is the Presence with a sacred *now*, what Quakers have long known as the Inward Light. This Light is inclusive, continually revealing, life-giving, and independent of creeds, dogma and ecclesial institutions. Having never damaged one single person, The Way's radical yet healing politics and experience of "growth" express a powerful, universal and consistent concern for all people and the Earth. The Way, then, encourages an infinite diversity within an all-inclusive and cosmic wholeness. Indeed, as *the* language of Divine peace, justice and compassion, it communes openly with each person, everywhere. Essential to The Way is its grounded hope, an achievable vision of Love's unchanging and unchangeable security for everybody and the planet.

Experience tells us that awareness of The Way flourishes in contemplative prayer, in our personal and corporate moments with the Divine. As Beauty and Love, as the Inward Light, it is our spiritual Home that renders inconceivable any separation not only from the One but also from very selves, Nature and the universe. Consequently, The Way's eco-complexion supports a global Inter-Species Community with an eye to recovering and maintaining our own and the Earth's good health. As such, it is wholly commensurate with our Quaker ecological vision and corporate Testimonies.

1. Setting the Scene

WHEN I WAS seven years old and walking with my mother across a bridge in Manchester in England's north, I noticed something floating on the blackened, stagnant waters of the canal directly below us—birds' nests built on the hardened scum of factory waste. Having been told by my parents and teachers that God loves all creatures, I was shocked and saddened by what I saw. It was probably the first time I intuited the Spirit-ignoring side of humanity in respect to Nature.

I grew up next to a farm whose land stretched into a vale with a lovely wood whose sea of blue-bells always made me smile. They are still my favourite flower. From my bedroom window I could see the moorlands of Derbyshire in the distant east, and we'd spend summers in Wales and Ireland, both with their abundant natural beauty.

Winter also presented its special, pristine gifts. I remember one very snowy day in particular when, arriving home from primary school and after knocking on the door, I turned around to continue enjoying what I now see was a frosted Eden that had settled everywhere. Feeling content and secure in its deep hush and stillness, I knew the Spirit was also everywhere, here and now. It was then I heard myself whispering, "This is what Heaven is like".

Back at school, stories of Jesus' miracles included his amazing power over Nature, and we were told he loved the countryside. My little self happily accepted all this, and it flowed into my enjoyment of colouring pictures of Jesus in fields, gardens, on hilltops and country roads, by the river, on the lake, and in the desert. All these images complemented my love of Nature Study and although I couldn't then articulate it, they helped me see how Jesus, the Spirit, myself, everyone else, and the natural world were somehow linked—or, as I now put it, interconnected and interdependent within the Kingdom of God.

The "Kingdom" I have in mind today—I usually call it "The Way" to avoid sexist and élitist connotations—is most definitely *not* the sanitized, often sentimentalized and politically-vapid version familiar to many current and former church-goers.² This particular view has the Church in general, even one's own denomination, representing the Kingdom on Earth while helping people prepare for the Kingdom in Heaven after they die. Such a dualistic "two-Kingdoms" understanding has been condemned over the centuries by various individuals and groups including the seventeenth-century Quakers. One such Quaker was Benjamin Nicholson who, with startlingly modern reasoning, derided the Church for confining God to "a place in heaven a great many miles above [our] heads" rather than filling

heaven and earth and all things [because] the heaven of heavens cannot contain [God who] is omnipresent in all places . . . of [whom] all things consist, and . . . have their life and being.³

The more prominent William Dewsbury agreed, adding that he "felt the hand of the Lord within . . . to keep the way of the tree of life" (i.e. the Kingdom).⁴

The Kingdom-Way I *do* have in mind is précised in the Sermons on the

² See Attachment 1 for a brief description of the Gospels' Kingdom of God.

³ *A Blast from the Lord* (London: Calvert, 1653), p. 5.

⁴ *The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent* (London: Calvert, 1655), p. 13.

Mount and Plain, in their Beatitudes, and in the Epistle of James and Gospel of Thomas. These narratives were intended to portray the counter-intuitive, often counter-cultural, and nonviolent manifesto of Jesus of Nazareth.⁵ This manifesto, *the* authoritative illustration of Christian discipleship for everyone, continues as a message of love and faith, as a unique and enduring enunciation of peace, justice and compassion that must now incorporate the Earth.

The Way and the Early Friends

The Way was integral to the daily internal and external conduct of the early Friends.⁶ As their final authority, this “Inward Light”, “Inward Teacher” or “Guide” was their shared spiritual meeting house, a place of acceptance and renewal for anyone prepared to manifest The Way in the world (Jn:14.17). As such, The Way was their unifying language and source of their right-walking but also because it had been the central focus of Jesus’ life and message.⁷ Tellingly, George Fox’s first known published work was *To All that would know the Way to the Kingdom* (1653). Throughout his writings we find Fox repeatedly urging his fellow Quakers to dwell in the purity of The Way: “abiding inwardly in the Light” would ensure “unity one with another”.⁸

His co-religionist, Samuel Fisher, understood The Way as that “which God now is”, the emphasis being his. Dorothy White strove to live in The Way’s “everlasting streams of Love and Consolation”. Francis Howgill’s seminal *Some of the Mysteries of God’s Kingdom Declared* (1658) was found among Fox’s library after the latter’s death in 1691, a sure sign of its importance to Fox. The Friends would prominently cite James 4:1-3 on the title page of their famous 1661 *Declaration* to Charles II—“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” The leading Friend and farmer, James Nayler, saw The Way as the “Garden of God”. He likened it to

a tree that grows high, hard and strong, yet is full of fruit and power and knows the poor, the innocent, the sufferer and [person] of sorrows. And the end of this growth is the pure rest, soft, tender and the true fold for lambs, where the lions must lie down in the end if they come to rest. In the Kingdom there is no strife in the mind, no secret smittings which defile the rest and lead to division and separation.⁹

⁵ For the distinction between the Gospels’ Jesus and the historical person see my *What Love Can Do* (hereafter *WLCD*. Melbourne: Morning Star, 2016), p. viii.

And for the Sermons see Mt. 5-7; Lk. 6:17-49 (the Beatitudes at Mt. 5:1-12; Lk. 6: 20-31). The Sermons are a collection of diverse Jesus sayings representing much of his non-creedal and non-dogmatic interpretation of Torah. Their strong affinity to Wisdom suggests that some of the sayings are authentic Jesus (a Wisdom teacher?) while others probably originated among the initial Jesus followers and the later “early Church”.

⁶ See D. Nesti, “Early Quaker Ecclesiology”, *Quaker Religious Thought* 18, 1 (1978), p. 22.

⁷ See my *The Early Quakers and the ‘Kingdom of God’* (hereafter *TEQ*. San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2012), esp. pp. 2, 34 and chp. 5.

⁸ Fox, *To All That Would Know the Way to the Kingdom* (s.l.: s.n., 1653). Also Fox in *Several Papers* (s.l.: s.n., 1654), p. 7.

⁹ Fisher, *Apokryta Apokalypta* (London: Wilson, 1661), p. 8; White, *An Epistle of Love and of Consolation* (London: Wilson, 1661), p. 14; Howgill (London: Simmonds, 1658), *passim* and esp. pp. 38-48: see also Isaac Penington, *Expositions with Observations* (London: Macock, 1656) for an 83 pp. meditation on the Sermon on the Mount, and see also his *Some of the Mysteries of God’s Kingdom Glanced At* (s.l.: s.n., 1663). See *TEQ*, esp. pp. 170-2, Appendix 3, and my “Recovering the Lost Radiance”, *Quaker Religious Thought*

For William Penn, The Way was “primitive Christianity”. And during the eighteenth-century, American Friend John Woolman recognized it as the universal “Principle which is Pure”. And so on. As these and the many, *many* other examples from the first Friends show, the Quaker movement would not have existed without The Way.¹⁰

Bequeathing their interpretation and practice of The Way to future generations, it would eventually give rise to the Society’s corporate Testimonies—Simplicity, Truth, Equality and Peace. Any formally-discerned Testimony to Earthcare will also be traceable to such early Friends as botanist Thomas Lawson, and to William Penn.¹¹ And let us not forget that Fox himself is credited with introducing the concept of the botanical garden to North America.

Outline of this Essay

But does The Way have a place in *today’s* Religious Society of Friends, many of whose members in the unprogrammed tradition in particular claim to be post-Christian?¹² It’s a question that first invites a brief overview of The Way in which I discuss its main features. How, for instance, it is continually revealing, independent of creeds, dogma and ecclesial institutions, and full of grounded hope. Such hope contains an achievable vision of Love’s unchanging and unchangeable security for all people and our planet home. I also include The Way’s capacity to always honour its promise of a positive, adventurous, liberating and abundant life within the compass of its unconditional and unlimited Love.¹³

Since The Way has never damaged one single person, we shall see how its radically different politics and experience of growth express a powerful, universal, and consistent concern for everybody and the Earth. Indeed how as Divine Beauty, Love and “the greenness of God’s finger” (Hildegard of Bingen), it renders inconceivable any separation from Nature since without Nature there is no way.¹⁴ Consequently, we will observe how The Way’s eco-complexion supports a global Inter-Species Community with an eye to recovering and maintaining the Earth’s good health while nurturing our own ecological vision and right-walking, our own Heaven-and-Earth perspective.

Crucially, I will highlight how awareness of The Way flourishes in contemplative prayer, in our personal and corporate moments with the Divine. And how, too, it encourages a seemingly infinite diversity within an all-inclusive wholeness. I also introduce The Way as *the* language of Divine peace, justice and compassion, and describe how it communes with each person,

113, 1 (2009), Article 4 at <<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt/vol113/iss1/4>>. And Nayler, *Love to the Lost* (London: Calvert, 1656), prelim. p. 3.

¹⁰ Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived* (Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1857), *passim*; Woolman, *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman* (NY.: Macmillan, 1922), p. 380.

¹¹ Lawson was convinced the natural world reflected Divine Wisdom; see his *Dagon’s Fall Before the Ark* (London: s.n., 1679), p. 85.

¹² e.g. Presence, Heaven, Abba-Imma, Source, The Christ, The Christa, Sacred Womb, Brahman, The Divine/Wisdom, the Light, Love, Great Spirit, Wakan-Tanka, The One, Ground (of our being), Eden, Thou/You, Divine Purity, the Source, New Covenant, The Day (of Visitation), Life-Giver, Eternity, Eternal Word, Divine Consciousness, Eternal Brightness, Dimension of Love.

¹³ For a comprehensive and contemporary understanding of The Way see *WLCD*, *passim*, and also pp. 9-11.

¹⁴ See <http://www.sistersofmercy.ie/_uploads/news/files/Congregation/two_ecological_prophets.pdf>.

everywhere. Finally, I show how it is impossible not to live The Way, our true Home, if we want a serious life in the Light. And also how our corporate faith and practice will fail to have lasting import without a conscious appreciation and application of The Way—indeed how, without The Way, Quakerism *per se* will not only be lost in confusion but will eventually cease to exist.

2. The Way's Main Features

So let's start with Jesus, the architect of the Kingdom-Way. For me, he understood The Way as subject, object, and verb. As **subject**, he knew it as the very presence of the Eternal, the Life, with whom he had a mystical relationship. I have come to believe what might have been the very essence of this relationship is expressed succinctly by the following passage from the poetic *Mundaka Upanishad*:

Self is everywhere, shining forth from all beings,
Vaster than the vast, subtler than the most subtle,
Unreachable, but nearer than breath, than heartbeat.
Eye cannot see it, ear cannot hear it nor tongue
Utter it; only in deep absorption can the mind,
Grown pure and silent, merge with the formless truth.
As soon as you find it, you are free; you have found yourself;
You have solved the great riddle; your heart forever is at peace.
Whole, you enter the Whole. Your personal self
Returns to its radiant, intimate, deathless source.¹⁵

As **object**, The Way remains the holy state of Truth, “that of God”, within every person, situation and thing as the *Mundaka* intimates. Luke 17:20-21 also confirms The Way as being within and among us. And finally as **verb**, it is God-in-action, something that can be spread around the world through our right-walking, by our *living* The Way. In this capacity it is of tangible support and spiritual nurture for all people without exception and precondition.

Followers of The Way live with simplicity, generosity and tenderness, and enjoy how it is ever-near as the Presence. It rises above time, place and culture while infusing them. The Gospels show us a Divine Way that is liberating and empowering, one that always speak to our condition. In following The Way, we forge qualitative, organic unity among ourselves and others, and pursue the freedom found in its peace, justice and compassion (Mt. 5:48). We do so with the abiding hope of embedding these three essential features of our lives—peace, justice and compassion—permanently into the *political* life of our respective societies. However, while it grounds all of life itself, giving it meaning and purpose, The Way does not instantly appear. Needing to be revealed through human agency, it begins small like a mustard seed, and involves struggle and persistence while embracing the long-term.

The Way of Peace, Inner and Outer

¹⁵ *Mundaka Upanishad* (tr. Swami Nikhilananda. 3rd Mundaka, khanda 1, mantras 7, 8 at <<http://sanatan.intnet.mu/>>.

From what I've written so far, it will be clear that The Way, which is transformative on the personal level, is fundamental to the cause of peace. A vital aspect of this is treating people and their needs as equally sacred, caring for their well-being and helping them, if they so wish, to bear any burden they may have. Such mutuality speaks the language of steadfast love which works against anything that diminishes or denies the full humanity of men, women and children. Followers of the Way, therefore, work hard to protect the innocent and vulnerable. In doing so, they strive to eliminate inappropriate, harmful thoughts and actions towards others. They never condone prejudice or any kind of violence associated with political and religious ideology, hierarchy, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, physical appearance, mental prowess, economic or social status, and class bias.

The Way (the Presence, the Word) is also “made flesh” in dazzlingly myriad shapes and forms. Being utterly creative, then, it can move us, as it might have William Wordsworth,

with the joy of elevated thoughts;
A sense sublime . . .
A motion and a Spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.¹⁶

Previously, Francis Howgill had written of the “eternal brightness shed abroad through all things [and] which pierces through . . . even that which is invisible.”¹⁷ His belief is consonant with those who today acknowledge a foremost aspect of The Way—that all humans and non-humans are not only spiritually “of one blood . . . on the face of the Earth”, as Fox preached, but biologically related since we are all born of the Earth and universe. They cite studies of mitochondrial DNA which reveal a human genetic heritage that retains only one female lineage surviving from our earliest ancestors to the present day.¹⁸ This biological connection is given greater profundity when we address that of God in everyone, and in every situation and thing. Celebrating The Way in this manner, we find strength to partake in measures that facilitate genuine unity among us all, and which restore and protect the Earth.

The Way's miraculously creative nature can be observed in those who, according to Thomas Kelly, “live in time with the joy and assurance of Eternity”, they who determinedly reduce any distancing they have from Divine Love.¹⁹ I prefer “distancing” to “separation” or “sin” because I believe it is impossible to be separated from Love, and that the word “sin” with its unfortunate associations and inaccuracies is moribund.²⁰ For me, distancing is a consequence of anything preventing us from fully realizing our Divine potential. Hence, when anything distracts us from The Way we are incomplete, out of alignment with Love and thus with our true selves. This could well be a

¹⁶ From “Ode on Immortality and Lines from Tintern Abbey”(1798) (London: Cassel, 1885), pp. 41-2.

¹⁷ Howgill, *The Invisible Things of God* (London: Simmonds, 1659), p. 147.

¹⁸ See P. Lunn, *Costing Not Less Than Everything* (2011) at <www.gci.org.uk/Documents/Text-of-Spoken-Swarthmore-Lecture.pdf>, p. 3.

¹⁹ See Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 45.

²⁰ For the impossibility of separation from God, see the beautiful conversation between Divine Love and the soul of Mechthild of Magdeburg (c.1207-c.1282 or 1294) in “A Thirteenth-Century Mystic and Beguine, Mechthild of Magdeburg” in A. Kemp-Welch, *Of Six Mediaeval Women* (London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 57-82, esp. p. 77.

root cause of the harm we direct towards ourselves, each other and the planet. The Bengali teacher, Rabindranath Tagore, advised that

When people do not realize their kinship with the world, they live in a prison-house whose walls are alien to them. When they meet the Eternal Spirit in all objects, then are they emancipated, for then they discover the fullest significance of the world into which they are born; then they find themselves in perfect Truth, and their harmony with the All is established.²¹

The Eternal Spirit or The Way is thus our “rock” (Mt. 16:18). As such it upholds and fortifies our confidence in the power of Love, in our knowing that we can never, as Penn assured, “fall below the arms of God, how low soever it be we fall.”²² When *lived*, such faith and trust, and the confidence they bring, are contagious. They course through our love for neighbours, including those considered strangers and enemies, *because* of the love we have for ourselves as companions of the Spirit. The Way, then, advocates a very different politics in which all relationships—based on peace, justice and compassion—are prayerful, equitable, and harmonious. With equity for all in mind, people in such relationships practice persuasion and try hard to anticipate conflicts before they appear. At the same time, they work to resolve conflicts that have already arisen. As a result, it is natural they build thoughtful, hospitable, forgiving, out-going communities in permanent and healthy tension with their wider societies. Such communities, nurtured in The Way, are a visible sign of our unity *with* The Way, with that which is the Real, the One—all-embracing and all-encompassing Love.

3. The Way is One

What the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* identifies as the Reality “behind” the material is that same Love or Brahman who, being omnipresent, is alive to every unfolding moment.²³ Of its nature this Love is unconditional; as such, it can do no other but love. Love *only* loves. And being all-embracing, all-encompassing, and all-pervasive it is without limit, free of space and time. It follows that Love, the All, cannot be “out there”, above and beyond the universe, because “out there” contradicts the very nature of Love. In *Le Milieu Divin*, an essay concerning the meaning of the universe and our place in it, the mystic and scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, wrote:

However vast the divine milieu may be, it is in reality a centre [with] the properties of a centre, and above all the absolute and final power [of Love] to unite (and consequently to complete) all beings within its breast. In the divine milieu all the elements of the universe touch each other by that which is most inward and ultimate in them.²⁴

²¹ *Sadhana* (London: Macmillan, 1957 [1913]), p. 8.

²² *Some Fruits of Solitude* (London: Northcott, 1693), p. 13.

²³ *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (tr. Swami Madhavananda. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1950), pp. 124, 376. 3rd ed.

²⁴ See *Le Milieu Divin* (NY: Harper & Row, 1965), esp. pp. 92-3; also pp. 60-1 where he wrote, “the human soul, however independently created our philosophy represents it as being, is inseparable, in its birth and in its growth, from the universe into which it is born.”

“Out there”, then, does exist because, as we have seen, to love is to make dynamic, on-going connection. This is why Meister Eckhart believed God is all in all, and that all is One. Boethius said something similar: in *The Consolation of Philosophy* we find the Eternal (God) who is “the simultaneous and complete possession of infinite life.”²⁵ In other words, God is without beginning and end, is ever-here, ever-now and everywhere. Hence, everything—including ourselves, the Earth and universe—is held in what may be called a loving cosmic “In Here” or “With Me”, held in a Divine Consciousness or Consciousness of Love.

In our own times, Denise Levertov gently captured something of these observations in her poem *The Avowal*:

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit’s deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.²⁶

This non-dualist outlook conforms to the cosmic view of the great mystics. Teresa of Àvila, for instance, likened this Oneness, this “spiritual marriage” as she called it, to “rain falling from heaven into a river or stream becoming one and the same liquid, so that the river and the rain water cannot be divided.” Ramanuja, a giant soul from Tamil Nadu in India, was confident that “Brahman ensouls [existence] by constituting the soul of [existence] . . . and [that] all entities constitute Brahman’s body.” That is to say, all entities, whether sentient or otherwise, are immediately in and of God; they constitute *advaita* (Oneness).²⁷

So, in rejecting “out there” we not only confirm any separation from Love to be impossible but also that all Nature, including ourselves, possesses Divine essence, and thus entitlement to moral consideration and protection from unsustainable exploitation.

A Different Genesis

Still, there are those who marry a dualism of Spirit and matter to a literalist reading of Genesis 1:28.²⁸ Such bibliolatry and repudiation of Oneness, both of which are seen to justify subduing and dominating the Earth, continually create havoc for the planet. They are, of course, utterly *contra* to the core

²⁵ *The Consolation of Philosophy* (tr. W. Cooper. NY: Carlton House, s.n.), p. 115.

²⁶ See *The Stream and the Sapphire* (NY.: New Directions, 1997), p. 6.

²⁷ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* (London: Fount, 1995), p. 176; Ramanuja, *Vedarthasamgraha* (tr. J. van Buitenen. Puna: Deccan College, 1962), p. 195.

²⁸ For theological insights into the language and contexts of Gen. 1:28 see *WLCD*, pp. 115-17.

message of the first creation story at Genesis 1:1 through to 2:4a. Here we see Love's

- (i) delighting in the Earth ("delighting" = *Gan 'Edhen* = "Eden");
- (ii) generous and tender concern for the welfare of *all* creatures, human and non-human alike;
- (iii) assurance that the Earth and all its inhabitants are sacred and interdependent, and
- (iv) insistence that the land must never be destroyed but sustainably managed. In other words, humans have dominion over the land—that is, a solemn duty of care and maintenance—rather than any authority to wantonly exploit it.²⁹

Reinforcing this message, early Friend Isaac Pennington noted how "God is not an enemy to Nature but to the corruption and disorder of Nature."³⁰ He may have been thinking of God's covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17) in which God and Noah (= humanity) formerly establish an unshakable unity with the Earth.

Trusting our Inward Light

If our acceptance of Oneness, our understanding of Genesis and trust in the Inward Light provide the basis of our efforts to keep the Earth and humanity healthy for Love's sake, we will be super-equipped to give witness, inner and outer, to the following spiritual truth: *all the Earth's life-forms and things, in kinship with its atmosphere and stratosphere, comprise a dynamic, complex and vast eco-interplay that both affirms Nature's intrinsic worth, and reflects the reality and wonder of The Way (the All, Ultimate Reality, the loving God) who is completely intrinsic to, and upholds, everyone and everything.*

Our openness to this truth will determine how our right-walking over the planet is actually our right-walking *for* it. This is one reason why it is of immeasurable advantage for us to hear the stories of those who, in our own times, care deeply for the Earth while valiantly spreading peace, justice, and compassion. Through them we see The Way-in-action, The Way as verb—people like the robustly green Eastern Orthodox Bartholomew 1. Since his elevation in 1991 as archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, his magnificent work concerning the planet's welfare reflects not only the growing awareness worldwide of such matters but also the much-welcomed and developing synthesis of spirituality, theology and science. He enacts and represents a commitment to Earthcare as a spiritual concern that continues to generate a powerful global outreach.³¹

Stories like Bartholomew's—we'll see others later—show us that everyone can enjoy a healthy balance to their life if, in following The Way, they directly co-operate with Nature and the Oneness that upholds it. Such co-operation eradicates the fear associated with survival-subdue thinking by ensuring the

²⁹ See Attachment 2—"Examples of Earth-Caring Scripture".

³⁰ Pennington, *Some Things Relating to Religion* (s.l.: s.n., 1668), Sig. A2.

³¹ For Bartholomew 1 see <<http://rsesymposia.org/files.php?catid=176&pcatid=162>>.

unifying Light is never extinguished (Jn. 1:5). It resurrects us into spiritual freedom, that is, the Love we find in ourselves, in our neighbours and in the world at large. And it transfigures us into spiritual maturity (or “perfection”), into the Heaven that is unconditional and unlimited Love. In doing so, it ever-incarnates the pure language of the Spirit in which there is no division, coercion, distancing or cross. The hope implied here is a radiance of the Eternal who cradles our Quaker identity, an identity forever discovered in The Way.

In Living the Way

So far, we have seen how The Way gives birth to Divine peace, justice, equality, love and compassion, creative joy, truth, simple living in caring, forgiving and out-going communities, and the need to spread all these throughout the world as best we can—the “great commission” so-called (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). From our gospel reading we learn how Jesus’ own confidence in The Way inspired his followers, so much so that they came to recognize it as *the* sovereign driving force for themselves and all people to which today we must add “and the planet”. He, they, and many others since, have shown us how spreading this joy of Pentecost, The Way, means living fully for a Love who is directly available to us without intermediaries.

In living The Way, we demonstrate not only how much in love with Love we are but also our right-walking towards completeness, that is to say, unity and wholeness in the Spirit—what “salvation” actually means.³² When taking The Way fully, even for a short time, we are perfect (fully mature spiritually) and equal to God. In this vein, we cannot help but spread Divine peace, justice and compassion, and, as a happy consequence, assist the Earth in recovering, and continually maintaining, its good health. In doing so, we will act as though The Way is alive in this eternal *now*, something that accords entirely with our Divinely-ordained purpose, and more profoundly with the very meaning of history, indeed with the very meaning of all existence as this is permeated with Love and its beauty.

4. The Way of Truth, Beauty and Love

Just as we need food, air and water for our very existence, we need Love-The Way and its beauty for a flourishing spiritual life of joy, freedom, wisdom, and openness to amazement. All such gift us with opportunities for letting our lives speak Divine Truth, including truth to power. It is said we live to discover Truth and its beauty no less than to do what is right. In discovering them, we taste the sheer goodness of the Spirit.

The Sufi poet, Jami, saw beauty in humanity and Nature as the self-revelation of Love, the ever-enticing “All-Beautiful” with its welcoming sanctum of stillness, silence and care. Throughout his life, Beauty and Love were Jami’s travelling companions:

Wherever Beauty peeps out, Love appears beside it . . .
Beauty and Love are as body and soul . . .
They have always been together from the first.

³² In Mk. 6:56, *sózó* (save) suggests “to be made whole”.

Never have they travelled but in each other's company.³³

Beauty, the splendour of the True, can be (and often is) a wonderfully uniting feature of our lives. Like a magnificent piece of music, its call of Infinity can en-conscious us into how intensely alive we can be. To engage fully with any of its expressions necessitates tilling the inner soil of our humanity so we may know better our true self, that Spirit-filled treasure and full-of-wonder we have always been. "By the power of [this] comprehension", says Tagore, we will be "united with the all-pervading Spirit who is also the breath of [our] soul".³⁴

The more substantial our self-knowledge, knowing who we actually are, the greater will be our tranquility of mind, and capacity, too, for further knowing Truth and its beauty. By exploring our inner ecology, we celebrate ourselves as companions of the Spirit. Here is an experience of the true life which flourishes when we also care for others and forgive those who have wronged us. Forgiveness is a great act of peace, a gateway through which painful memories are confronted so that healing and wholeness return us to Heaven's path. In true forgiveness nobody is excluded, our understanding of compassion and healing is enriched and hopefully spread, and, with the presence of Love, we learn better how to forgive ourselves.

Contemplative Prayer

By focusing on The Way, particularly through our openness to others, and especially through regular meditation and contemplative prayer, we take the healing waters of our silent spring within and slow, s-l-o-w into stillness. Through *its* distillation, enhanced by standing "still in that which shows and discovers . . . sink[ing] down in that which is pure" (Fox)³⁵, we can intensify our awareness of those joyous and calming aspects of our lives and of Nature we habitually pass by. Put another way, contemplative prayer calls us into the holy cloisters of our existence to absorb more of life's sacredness and beauty. As nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher noted, we long to drink in the beauty of the world to be suffused by its Divine spirit.³⁶ And so, when walking or lying down in natural surroundings, when we observe, smell, touch, listen to, or simply gaze into their repose of perfection, we return home to within, to an acute apprehension of the Divine. "From sky to sod," wrote the poet Francis Thompson, "the world's unfolded blossom smells of God."³⁷

Adding much colour and shape to the human mosaic, this ancient path of prayer and wisdom has led many to sink down to the Seed they find in Nature. With such rootedness comes humility, that is to say, a feet-on-the-ground centeredness in Love, "humble" deriving from the Latin *humus* for "earth". In countering our predilection towards subduing the Earth, humility has the power to save the planet from extinction. Indeed, the deeper our humility, the more Nature's beauty will empower our work towards Earthcare while granting us perspective, courage and a certain serenity in persevering with the quest. As a result, humility always enriches The Way, and strengthens our

³³ F. Happold, *Mysticism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 253.

³⁴ Tagore, *ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵ Fox, Epistle 10 (1652) in *Collection . . . of Epistles* (London: Sowle, 1698), p. 11.

³⁶ *On Religion* (tr. J. Oman. London: Kegan Paul, 1893), p. 90.

³⁷ *The Poems of Francis Thompson* (ed. B. Boardman. London: Continuum, 2001), p. 120.

resolve to be patterns and examples in spreading its work and influence, in seeing what Love can do. With the eco-crisis being essentially spiritual, then, its solutions need thorough grounding in the Sacred, in The Way.

Such a stance challenges distancing which, as we have seen, narrows our spiritual perceptions including our sense of the aesthetic and its promise of replenishment. Thus free, even for a moment, we can bless one another and the non-human world as interlocking fruits of the Spirit together with the entire continuum of the universe and all *its* on-going evolutionary processes. It follows that while individually and together we *are* the Earth come conscious of itself, we must guard against making a stranger of the wholeness and unity that all of us, and the Earth, are in essence.

Being “born of the Earth and universe”, therefore, means understanding how and why we are one of each other, and one with all non-human life-forms and objects. Of course, this does not mean we are slaves to our genetics. Rather, as our out-going love indicates, it means we can locate to that level of consciousness where we can connect more freely with the Spirit and its artistry, the Earth. “When one sees God, the world and the soul,” says the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, “nothing higher is known.”³⁸ In this unity of the Eternal Being lies the promise of our spiritual, psychological and political liberation.

5. The Way of Liberation and Hope

I have described how The Way is a path to wholeness and unity, and how it upholds those who witness to Divine truth and justice, including Earthcare. Such a witness to Love is subversive to the political, commercial and industrial élites worldwide who continue to subject humanity to the reductionist nightmare we know as the neo-liberal “Market”. Despite the wealth this “Market” has produced in various parts of the world (e.g. China, India), we are painfully familiar with its barbarities and attendant injustices all of which seriously impair the unity of the human family. Along with the “Market” itself, these require neither amelioration nor humanization but *eradication*. In anticipation of such, a counter-Empire ethic of Love is urgently required, an eco-centric ethic entailing a radical rethink of our values along with the creation of long-term, justice-oriented solutions that work for all and the planet. Humanity has the intellectual and material means to undertake what Albert Einstein called “a substantial change in our manner of thinking”, a change that will heal the rifts between faith and reason, between the secular and the sacred.³⁹ The Way and its Beatitudes is a pronounced means to this end.

Ecological Vision

The “Market” is a child of distancing, of a debilitating ignorance and greed. The latter was identified as “lust” by George Fox and Friends whose criticism of wealth was consistently loud and vigorous. They reminded “the high and lofty ones” that they and their “much Earth” were what “the Kingdom of God

³⁸ *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (tr. Swami Tyagisananda. Mylapore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1949), pp. 34-5. 3rd ed.

standeth not in.” And they stated unambiguously that wealth prevented people from fully living into the Inward Light of the Christ, from following and spreading the Kingdom. As a consequence, wealth divorced people from caring for all of God’s “natural creatures”, each of which had its own God-given “natural right”.⁴⁰

The early Quakers were not alone in their pursuit of equity and justice, and of course their concern has been voiced many times since in different ages and places. In the middle years of the twentieth-century, for instance, C. S. Lewis concluded that humanity’s power over Nature rather than God’s was the power of some over others with Nature as their instrument.⁴¹ Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, too, has clearly outlined the direct connection between ecological degradation and injustice, between the plundering of the Earth’s wealth and the oppression of people by the rich and powerful.⁴²

And Rabbi Abraham Heschel, reflecting on the Earth as a “gigantic tool box for the satisfaction of [our] needs”—most of which, he said, were unnecessary—frequently addressed the urgency of rejecting such toxicity. He was concerned that we recapture our awe of the Presence in Nature so that we can partake fully of the real bread of Life. “We are”, he prayed poetically, “a trace of You in the world.”⁴³ With other like-activists, Heschel shared an ecological vision of a Love who has never ceased to be All-Who-Is.

While Lewis, Boff, Heschel and many others have recognized a great tragedy and the despair it brings, their statements nevertheless harbour hope for the Earth’s and our own healing. Indeed, there is nothing inviolate about this dangerous state of affairs. Having created it, we humans can (as we’ve seen) turn it around so that the Earth can enter, in sustainable ways, what Scottish poet Edwin Muir called a “green springing corner of young Eden”, one that trusts in the Spirit without fear.⁴⁴

Fear is the opposite of any genuine love. Jesus was emphatic that, along with fear of the future, it was the deep wound within us all, a wound that as yet lies at the heart of our unpeaceful thoughts and actions. It remains the wound that needs our understanding so that it can be cured quickly lest it festers. In 1 John 4:18-19 we read: “There is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out fear because fear has torment. [They] that fear [are] not made perfect in Love”. When love binds us to the Spirit/The Way, fear passes out. Small wonder that “be not afraid” and related statements appear well over three hundred times in the Jesus Testament!

We abandon this fear-less and persevering hope at our peril, that is to say, the hope implicit in The Way of refreshment and restoration, the hope and confidence embodied in Jesus’ example and assurance that The Way will make all things new (Rev. 21:5). This hope invites us into The Way of exodus and resurrection that not only maintains its sovereignty of Love within and among us all, but strongly encourages an adventurous embodiment of its politics. In other words, it encourages a working towards our own and the planet’s

⁴⁰ See J. Parnell, *The Trumpet of the Lord Blown* (London: Calvert, 1654/5), p. 1ff. Also Fox (1667), *Gospel-Truth Demonstrated (Doctrinals)*. London: Sowle, 1706), p. 274.

⁴¹ *The Abolition of Man* (NY.: Macmillan, 1947), p. 35.

⁴² *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (NY.: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 111.

⁴³ *God in Search of Man* (NY.: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1955), pp. 34, 162; see Heschel’s poem “At Dusk” in *The Ineffable Name of God* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 75.

⁴⁴ *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), pp. 198-200.

healing so that we can choose, like Jesus, *to be The Way ourselves* as best we can—choose to be the eyes, hands, feet and voice of Love.

Our Heaven-and-Earth Perspective

By enacting and spreading The Way we urge the abandonment of an anthropocentric, patriarchal and hierarchical perspective for one that incorporates the Spirit, ourselves and the Earth—our Heaven-and-Earth perspective. As we saw with Heschel and Boff, adopting *this* perspective increases awareness of how over-attentiveness to our needs goes hand-in-hand with inattentiveness to those of the planet. And also how habitats and species are destroyed so that we can enjoy items and services that are invariably wasteful. Indeed, it is a perspective that deepens our understanding of just how enslaved we are to the two-dimensional world of consumerism.

To counter such disconnection, activists call on institutions, big and small, to show conclusively how they foster and constantly monitor a healthy human-Earth relationship. There is an enormous lack of understanding, they say, about the Earth as the maternal principle from which everything experienced is born. Like the late eco-campaigner, Thomas Berry, they bring to our attention the widespread ignorance of the Earth's Spirit dimension as "a quality of the Earth itself [rather than] a human spirituality with [a mere] special reference to the planet Earth."⁴⁵

A Heaven-and-Earth perspective propels us to empty our own right-walking into the communal sphere so that Divine Light exposes the aforementioned barbarities and injustices. Of course, such an emptying has been practiced in numerous, well-documented ways on local, national, regional and global levels. And we've come to know how it requires something we have met before, humility. Humility and its attentiveness presuppose an ability to admit our mistakes and learn from them so that we can discern Spirit-led ways of seeing the world in its totality. Again, the key to following this healing path is The Way.

Our living The Way as a priority, then, gives birth to different concepts of growth and politics that encourage a healthy kinship for all Earth citizens. These concepts depict an image of Heaven that enables people to own their own history and behaviour in the light of Divine peace, justice, compassion and beauty. Thus, our propensity to distance from The Way will diminish and our confidence will grow for developing Life-enhancing socio-political, economic, health, educational, and spiritual-theological pathways that meet our and the planet's true needs—a vision with hope rather than a gospel of fear. Such a Heaven-and-Earth right-walking, our true pilgrimage, will always be a healing Light to "the nations" (Rev. 21:24).

6. The Way is Green

Being an effective pilgrim on The Way means, among other things, gaining insights into the nature of Love as well as love of Nature, how Nature is not an "it" but a living "thou" worthy of our awe and lasting respect. Following The Way in tandem with Earthcare facilitates our becoming a Heaven-and-Earth community, a commonwealth of Love. Such a pilgrim life is an eco-

⁴⁵ T. Berry, *The Sacred Universe* (NY.: Columbia U.P., 2009), p. 69.

requirement especially of those living in over/developed regions of the planet (like us) or who enjoy privileged conditions outside them. In regard to Earthcare, the pilgrim life will involve practicing one or more of the readily accessible forms of witness to peace, justice and compassion.

One such form is fasting which can inspire us to (i) support food security for hundreds of millions of people worldwide, (ii) openly question the suitability of foods we, they and others grow, use and eat, (iii) raise awareness about the effects of anthropogenic climate change and ecological degradation on the quality of food, and (iv) inquire as to how and in what form foodstuffs are preserved, presented, transported and purchased. Fasting's simplicity can affirm Nature's intrinsic spiritual-religious importance.

Another form of witness, of living The Way, is tree-planting. A few years ago, some f/Friends of mine showed me tiny seeds they were sowing on their property; they were hardly bigger than a pin-head. "And that's what they grow into", they said, pointing to the enormous eucalypts in the middle distance. The contrast was truly astonishing! While ancient trees connect us all to the past, tree planting in the present is a sign of hope, indeed a tangible symbol of Love, of the Life. It also says something of significant and lasting value on many levels to future generations.

Glistening in the Waters

As the above examples show, The Way provides the ideal spiritual environment for such responses to what Love asks of us all, and, as one would expect, they have a considerable provenance. During the Middle Ages, for instance, Benedictine, Cistercian and Franciscan monastics were well-acquainted with such prayerful courses of action, their innovative agricultural techniques improving both the natural fertility of soils and the aesthetic appeal of landscapes. Individuals, too, made their mark. Among them, Meister Eckhart preached a God who "ever blooms and is verdant in all [the] Godhead." Francis of Assisi's *The Canticle of the Sun* testified, as is well-known, to a kinship with Nature as brother, sister and mother.⁴⁶

What Hildegard of Bingen called the "grace of *viriditas*"—the Divinizing life-energy that shares itself—saw the Earth swelling with the fecund, greening power of life's fertility and fruitfulness. Swelling, too, with the Divine Life as it pulsates throughout the universe. Through her verses, more passionate than Wordsworth's, God could declare:

I am the fiery life of the essence of divinity.
I flame above the beauty of the fields
And glisten in the waters.
I burn in the sun, moon and stars.
With an airy wind I stir up all things vitally
Through invisible life that sustains all things.

Hildegard happily invoked the Spirit when drawing on images and concepts from Ps.103 and Ecclesiasticus 24, both celebrating God's renewal and sustaining of life itself:

⁴⁶ M. O'C Walshe (tr. & ed.), *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart* (NY.: Crossroads, 2009), p. 80; also *The Canticle of the Sun* at <<http://www.appleseeds.org/canticle.htm>>.

From you the clouds flow,
The ether flies, stones receive moisture,
Streams flow forth,
And the earth exudes greenness.⁴⁷

Her companion in letter-writing, Bernard of Clairvaux, also illustrated a penchant for Nature when advising his fellow monks to treat the land and the tools they used with the same reverence as the sacred vessels on the altar. This simple insight by someone who once said that he had no other masters than the beeches and the oaks, helps us move from distancing to unity between ourselves, the Spirit and the Earth, from worshipping objects to being a prayerful communion of Earth citizens.⁴⁸

Seekers After Reconciliation

In our own times we continue to observe the witness of many who follow The Way with justice for all people and the Earth. Dorothy Stang, for instance, a U.S./Brazilian Roman Catholic religious sister and eco-activist, spent forty years working in Amazonia supporting poor farmers and native people's rights to their lands. She also established Christian base communities, and implemented measures for protecting the rainforest and preventing further losses of plant, insect, bird and animal species. She did much more. Sadly, Dorothy was murdered in 2005 aged seventy-three, shot by hired gunmen in the pay of loggers and landowners. She went to her death reciting the Beatitudes.⁴⁹

Wendell Berry, a poet, farmer and eco-activist, expands the manner in which The Way and its unity is prioritized and demonstrated by those who, like Dorothy Stang, actively seek after reconciliation. He says when Jesus spoke of spiritual abundance in Jn. 10:10, the implication was that life itself is never reducible by division, category or degree. He also emphasizes that being in *the* Life is never the monopoly of one person, group or nation because it is open to all and is *one*—Heavenly *and* Earthly, spiritual *and* material, and divided only insofar as it embodies distinct creatures. We inhabit a finite world, he continues, that is infinitely holy, a world of time filled with life that is eternal. Jesus, he maintains, wanted us to be responsible and fulfilled participants in and for this L/life.⁵⁰

In the community-oriented work of such mystics and activists, we see more than a hint of the cosmological and visible power of what Hildegard called "Wisdom's energy". We also glimpse Love as immutable and spiritual abundance; Love as diffuse and suffusing; Love as our healing, forgiveness and reconciliation; Love as joy, celebration and laughter; Love as welcoming and sharing; Love as peace, justice, compassion, truth and beauty; Love as perfection and liberation; Love as Nature, our true Home, you and me; Love as the culmination of all knowledge. And we see more than a hint, too, of our own vital role in this great confluence of the physical and spiritual forces of *shalom*.

⁴⁷ J. Schroeder, "A Fiery Heat", *Mystics Quarterly* 30, 3 (2004), pp. 88-9, 91.

⁴⁸ For Bernard of Clairvaux see A. Neander, *The Life and Time of St. Bernard* (London: Rivington, 1843), p. 12.

⁴⁹ For Stang see <http://1325mujerestejindolapaz.org/eng/sem_dorothy_eng.html>.

⁵⁰ W. Berry, "The Burden of the Gospels", *The Christian Century* 122, 19 (2005), p. 27.

7. Concluding Comments: The Way Home

When giving life to this vision of *shalom*, we are led to continually renew our relationships with each other, and with Nature in all its magnificence, interconnectedness and interdependence. This is an exercise in humility, compassion and right-walking, an exercise in liberation ecology. These in turn tell us that, while we are one species among many, our superior intellectual ability means we must care for this already badly-abused Earth in respectful and sustainable ways if we wish to survive. The Earth and its plenitude is not peripheral to The Way but *essential* to it, and to the full range of its promises.

So what, then, does Love ask of us all? Surely this: that we live “in the virtue of that Life and Power that takes away the occasion of all wars” (Fox) whether internal and external, and so nurture a culture in which listening to, and learning from, the Earth is the norm. Such caring will be effective and rewarding if our living consciously and sensitively *with* the planet, and not merely *from* it, is practiced within the Realm of the Sacred—The Way, the Life and Power.

Isaiah’s beautiful prayer (55:9-13) expresses how this vision and act of *shalom* is cosmic, “an everlasting sign that will endure forever” (v.13). When we are in partnership with the Life-Giver *and* the Earth we also become cosmic. And as the whole cosmos moves and has its being in Love, so, too, will The Way continue to express its invincible, indivisible, and loving power. With our grounded hope, one that necessarily works *with* life, we will respond to its call through our prayer and right-walking, through our mystical reach of *agape*. This is to describe a mutuality which, when performed in the Presence, leads to spiritual maturity in which a healing of our psyches helps engender a healing of the world.

A Language of Unity and Vision

Social and work-related responsibilities plus a host of other reasons means we sometimes forget that we and the Earth, this bundle of grace, share a story reaching far beyond our births to the “Big Bang”. And beyond *that* to the still small voice of the Light who ever was, of the Presence whose love forever blesses the Earth and all its forms and things—as, again, I remember from my snowy and other Nature-abundant moments.

Just as each aspect of ecological diversity is connected by a shared genetic and cosmic inheritance, so, too, The Way in all in all its majestic instancy and luminosities of Love, is our unifying sacred story. Of course, this story has many roots and manifestations, each different in length, width, composition and depth. And yet, like the individual pieces of a rose window, they comprise the same spiritual substance and purpose. In other words, The Way—the Oneness—is pregnant with infinite diversity within itself but harmonized and integrated into an all-embracing wholeness. Theologian Karl Barth once said, “God is the Peace that is above every estrangement” to which British Quaker Carol Hamby adds, “differences and diversity are not removed by unity [but] known experientially in a transformed consciousness that lives Unity.”⁵¹

⁵¹ See Barth’s *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1968), p. 445; Hamby, *A Theological Examination of Inwardness in the Faith and Practice of British Quakers* (Ph.D. Univ. of Birmingham, 2015),

Importantly, The Way is the spiritual-religious *language* of Heaven, the language that speaks from our innate holiness, an authoritative and coherent language that reflects our shared humanity in all its diversity. It is that graced discourse of sacred place where, in the words of Mary Evans (George Eliot), we “do not ramble apart but meet with a common impulse.” This “Eternal Word”, so named by George Fox,

which was in the beginning before all languages were, . . . brings all into one language, for that which keeps in many languages keeps in confusion.⁵²

Fox’s “one language” is the ever-enduring Kingdom-Way identified here as our inheritance and primordial experience. Each moment of this inheritance is potentially a Sabbath, a means of listening to Deep calling unto deep from which we can emerge as wellsprings of the Life, one to another.⁵³ This is because The Way is a paean to our oneness with that omnipresent and most revelatory of cosmic forces—unlimited and unconditional Love, the guiding principle of all life. “From Love the world is born,” so wrote an unknown Indian seer, “by Love it is sustained, towards Love it moves, and into Love it enters.” And so what was clearly at the center of Jesus’ life and message, *and* that of the early Quakers, can be central to our own life. As such, it deserves to be enjoyed as a discrete element of a continuing spiritual education.

And Finally . . .

In living The Way, we chose a well-marked spiritual path for witnessing to the end of human division and to lasting health for our planet home. We do so by listening long and hard to our Inward Light, by listening with humility to what the Gospels and other religious wisdom teach us, and more specifically to the Sermons and Beatitudes. We do so by hearing the Compassionate One who invites us to transform this world through a radical solidarity with all others and the Earth itself. And we do so by identifying with the Messenger of Eternal Peace who was prepared to die for The Way of Love.

When the planet and its perennially captivating grandeur and enchanting energy is the actively shared concern of the Presence and humanity, we will know it is functioning properly with no one person, group or community subduing and dominating its bio-systems. Such a happy interdependence will indeed eventuate if this blue miracle we inhabit, this single country called Earth, crammed as it is with Heaven and on loan to each generation, continually enjoys our dedication to its welfare. The Way, our Home and inspiration, whose constellation and texture is silence, is, along with its peace, justice and compassion, the key to this commitment in which we answer the call of Infinity where Heaven and Earth are one.

Attachment 1

p. 119 (at 68n). This work is, *inter alia*, a helpful exposé of the nature of diversity among contemporary British Quakers.

⁵² From *A Warning to the Rulers of England* in J. Nayler, *A Lamentation* (York: Wayt, 1653), p. 17.

⁵³ See Ps. 42:7 and Dewsbury, Letter (1661) in *A Faithful Testimony of . . . Dewsbury* (Works. London: Sowle, 1689), p. 185.

“KINGDOM OF GOD” and “Kingdom of [the] Heaven[s]” occur 162 times in the four Gospels and 104 times in Matthew, Mark and Luke combined. Matthew and Luke refer to it 48 and 28 times respectively with Matthew specifically mentioning it nine times in the Sermon on the Mount (see below). Mark has 14 references.

While all Jesus’ parables concern themselves with the Way, 15 directly do so. As with all the parables, they are underscored by powerful uses of metaphor, axiom, paradox, hyperbole, surprise and, one might say, poetry; see Mt. 5: 18, for instance, for Jesus’ use of hyperbole typical of Rabbinic language. In addition to these and his aphorisms (e.g. Mt. 6: 24; Mk. 8:35, 10: 31), the Gospel Jesus demonstrated the Way through healings, exorcisms and other miracles. Needless to say, the exorcisms and miracles are not to be taken literally.

The Way also appears eight times in Luke-Acts and 37 times in John—five as “Kingdom”, eight as “everlasting life”, six as “eternal life” and 18 as “life”. Hence, the Way (and the cosmological ‘kingship’ of Jesus) is also the dominant theme of the Fourth Gospel. The Pauline epistles have nine direct references, although the terms “in Christ”, “in the Lord” and “in him” are contextually resonant with “Kingdom”; still, it is surprising that Paul does not mention Jesus’ parables. James’ Epistle contains two references. The Book of Revelation has 10 alternative expressions such as “throne of God” and “fountain of the water of life”. The two Letters of Peter mention “Grace of Life” and “everlasting Kingdom”, while Jude has “eternal life”.

“Kingdom” or “Reign of God” also appear in the Targums, i.e. Aramaic translations or interpretations of the Hebrew Bible; these portray the “Kingdom” as Yahweh’s healing activity or as the manifestation of Yahweh at work in the world. The Hebrew Bible refers more frequently to “kingdom” (e.g. in Ps. 145; 1 Chr. 28: 5; 2 Chr. 13: 8) or “kingship”, the latter reflecting the hope that Yahweh will restore Israel’s power (see 1 Chr. 29: 10-12; Dn. 4: 3, 34; Ps. 24).

Attachment 2: Examples of Earth-Caring Scripture

Absorbing aspects of neo-Platonism from an all-pervading Hellenistic milieu, the early Church (and perhaps even its precursors, the Jesus-following assemblies) eventually came to prioritise the after-life life over all life on an Earth it considered “fallen”, marred by “sin”.⁵⁴ So it was that a belief developed of a separated Heaven and Earth, an unfortunate dichotomy that overlaid Jesus’ predominantly Heaven *and* Earth, unitary and Torah-inspired teaching. It was a dichotomy, however, that would enjoy a theological pre-eminence for nearly two millennia. Reinforced in the High Middle Ages by such luminaries as Anselm of Canterbury, one can observe the power of its charism in the two-dimensional mediaeval art of the Florentine, Fra Angelico, whose beautiful, heavenly, saintly yet static subjects remain resolutely focused on the afterlife

⁵⁴ A. du Toit writes, “The Israelite basis of the Christian message remains its inalienable fountain-head. The waters flowing from that source certainly intermingled with other streams but did not forfeit their essential character”: see his “Paulus Oecumenicus: Interculturality in the Shaping of Paul’s Theology”, *New Testament Studies* 55, 2 (2009), pp. 142-3.

while at the same time oblivious to the world around them.⁵⁵

Strains of this mythos, still prominent in Christian literalism today, help explain Christendom's failures over the years *vis-à-vis* the Earth, failures that have been criticised by modern environmentalists.⁵⁶ However, while some of their criticism is justified, much of it is also exaggerated: "the idea of Christianity as anti-ecological", writes eastern Orthodox theologian Elizabeth Theokritoff,

lodged itself in the popular mind [particularly c.1960-90] and created among environmentalists a widespread "group think" which dismissed the Christian tradition out of hand as a possible source for solutions to the environmental crisis.⁵⁷

Despite this, positive and innovative developments within Christendom in recent decades towards a Heaven-and-Earth theology and right-walking have superseded such criticism, as indeed has the growing rapprochement, if not in some cases synthesis, between theology and science in regard to Earthcare. Add to these developments an in-depth exegesis of the Hebrew Bible by Jewish and Christian theologians with respect to the Earth's ecology, an exegesis that has successfully evinced a non-human world experienced in active, concrete and generative ways.⁵⁸

In Genesis 1, for example, God declares "creation" as "good" on *five* occasions while in 1:11-12 we find non-humans "good" *without reference to humanity*. Also in Gen. 1, humans are created on the same day as the land animals, suggesting a certain kinship between all beings. Unlike other life-forms, therefore, humans are declared good *only in relation to the whole*. That is to say, humans are seen as natural components of a living biosphere with a Divine appointment as *custodians only*.

This brings us to Gen. 1:28 and what many concerned with Earthcare see as *the* problem—Divine permission for humans to "subdue", and have "dominion" over, Nature. Both are mentioned but *once* in the Hebrew Bible, in 1:28 itself, rather than as a general rule. However, if the passage is understood in its geographical, historical and socio-agricultural contexts, as it must, a picture emerges of a people struggling within the rigid confines of subsistence farming to eke out a living principally on marginal land.⁵⁹ It was a wrestling

⁵⁵ See his frescoes at <http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/museum_of_san_marco.html>.

⁵⁶ For a history of Christian literalist responses to environmentalism up to 2008 see P. Maltby, "Fundamentalist Dominion, Postmodern Ecology", *Ethics and the Environment* 13, 2 (2008), *passim*.

⁵⁷ E. Theokritoff, "Green Patriarch, Green Patristics: Reclaiming the Deep Ecology of Christian Tradition", *Religions* 8, 7 (2017), p. 2 of 19 at <<http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/8/7/116>>. Two of the most influential 20th century critics have been US mediaevalist Lynn White (1907-87) and Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912-2009), the latter regarded as the founder (in 1972) of the Deep Ecology movement in its modern form; see White's "Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", *Science* 155, 3767 (1967). New Series, pp. 1205-7; interestingly he looked to religion for help with environmental problems.

⁵⁸ In 1990, Pope John Paul II published *Peace with All of Creation* (https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html). Pope Francis has made a valuable contribution with his encyclical, *Laudato si': Praise Be To You: On Care For Our Common Home* (2015) at <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Franc/index.htm>>, *passim* and esp. pp. 7-9. For a history of the dispute between environmentalists and Christianity see Parts 1 & 2 of B. Taylor, "The Greening of Religion Hypothesis", *Ecotheology* 10, 3 (2016), *passim*. And for the said "rapprochement" see C. Harper, "Religion and Environmentalism" (2008), *Journal of Religion & Society* at <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/toc/SS03.html>>, Suppl. 3.

⁵⁹ C. Myers, "To Serve and Preserve", *Sojourners Magazine* 33, 3 (2004), p. 32. For Israelite agricultural/social conditions see R. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004 [2000]),

match with the elements usually performed with military-type determination.

Did they subdue the land? Not according to modern scholarship. The Israelites, labouring to confront the very real, daily challenges to their survival that the natural world posed—they invariably worked dry, rocky soils prone to regular visitations of drought—*strove to conserve* the fertility of the land for the next generation. Further, in Gen. 2:15, humans were expected to *till* the land, the Hebrew for “till” (*abad*) meaning to serve. In like fashion they were to “keep” (*samar*) their animals, *samar* meaning to keep safe, preserve. Scholarship has also discovered that few classical Judaeo-Christian commentators read 1:28 as advocating an unfettered exploitation of Nature.⁶⁰

Additionally, the original language of 1:28 cannot be ignored since it requires evaluation with respect to Israelite cosmology and anthropology.⁶¹ Hence, we find “subdue” (*kabash*), which was ordinarily used to describe a military tactic (remember our “military-type determination”), being tempered by the verb *radah* (“to have dominion over”).⁶² *Radah* is an imperative of *yarad*, to descend. So, depending on the context, *radah* can also mean “descending” or “walking among” while carrying a strong sense of a ruler as *first among equals*. The implication here is that those in authority are expected to interact with the general populace *and* the natural world with humility, compassion, justice, and tenderness (*cf.* Isa. 9:2-7). Further, the use of “image” in 1:27 assumes humans acting as the conduit of God/Love to all creation. Therefore, Gen. 1:28, reinforced by 1:27, suggests “dominion”—working *as God would* to live responsibly with, and care for, each other *and* the natural world; that is to say, acting towards Nature as God acts toward all of Nature. Therefore, as Paul Santmire suggests, the apparently harsh language gives voice, in part, to the theology of dominion and must be read in the context of the all-pervading harmonious world of *shalom* which Gen. 1 presupposes. *Not* “domination”, therefore, a concept alien to the spirit of the overall text.⁶³

Mindful of these interpretations, the core message of Genesis, particularly the first creation story at 1:1 through to 2:4a—itself influenced by the Babylonian epic, *Enuma Elish*—is (i) God’s delighting (= *Gan ‘Edhen* = “Eden”) in the Earth, (ii) generous and tender concern for the welfare of *all* creatures, human and non-human alike (*za’ar ba’alei hayyim*), (iii) insistence that the Earth and all its inhabitants are holy and interdependent, and (iv) that the land

passim and R. Hurkmans, *Sabbath, Jubilee and the Repair of the World* (M.A. McMaster Divinity College, 2012), *passim*.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, D. Ehrenfeld and P. Bentley, “Judaism and the Practice of Stewardship”, *Judaism* 34, 3 (1985), *passim* and esp. pp. 301-5; A. Cohen (ed.), *The Soncino Chumash* (London: Soncino Press, 1947), p. 6 for the thought of Shlomo Yitzchaki (*aka:* Rashi, 1040-1105); D. Vogel, “How Green is Judaism?: Exploring Jewish Environmental Ethics”, *Judaism* 50, 1 (2001), p. 79; J. Gindi, *Greening the Torah: The Use of Classical Texts in Jewish Environmentalist Literature* (M.A. University of Nth. Carolina, 2011), pp. 40-3; Myers, *ibid.*, *passim*.

⁶¹ J. Cohen, “*Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It*”: *The Ancient and Mediaeval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1992 [1989]), p. 5. Cohen has traced the history of Gen.1:28; see also his “The Bible, Man and Nature in the History of Western Thought”, *Journal of Religion* 65, 2 (1985), esp. p. 172.

⁶² For *kabash* as a military tactic see Nb. 32:21-22, and as subjugation (of slaves), Jer. 34:11.

⁶³ *The Soncino Chumash*, *ibid.*, p. 60. See also W. Towner, “Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible”, *Interpretation* 59, 4 (2005), p. 348; H. Tirosh-Samuels, “Nature in the Sources of Judaism”, *Daedalus* 130, 4 (2001), p. 102 for the Earth-affirming *Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabba* 7:13; L. Steffen, “In Defence of Dominion”, *Environmental Ethics* 14 (1992), pp. 63-80; R. Heirs, “Reference for Life and Environmental Ethics in Biblical Law and Covenant”, *Journal of Law & Religion* 13, 1 (1996-98), *passim*; L. Greenspoon, “How the Bible Serves to Ground Faith and Action”, *Journal of Religion & Society*, Suppl. 9 (2013), p. 31 at <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/toc/SS09.html>>.

should never be destroyed (*bal tashhit*).⁶⁴

There are *many* more examples.⁶⁵ These, along with the above passages, underscore a great spiritual truth: the Earth's life-forms and things comprise a dynamic, complex and vast eco-interplay that reflects the beauty and wonder of the Spirit/Love/The Way. Indeed, the wholistic character of Hebrew and Aramaic thought reinforces this understanding for in both languages we find no essential distinction between the Spirit and the flesh—perhaps one reason why Torah condemns the abuse of the flesh and, by implication, any destruction of the Earth's environments. As we have seen, both flesh and Earth were “made in the image of God (1:27)”, i.e. their very life *is* the image of God and thus inherently good. Crucially, our collective apprehension of this unity, this symbiosis, may well save us and the Earth from destruction.⁶⁶

Today, our worship of toxic idols—unbridled consumerism, the financial markets, perpetual economic and industrial “growth”, nationalism, militarism and warfare etc. coupled with the degradation of the Earth itself—continues to tear at our raiment of Divine Love. The outcomes of this self-induced humiliation, desolation and gross distortion of our spiritual-religious life (Isa. 24:1, 5-6; Jer. 3:2) is especially evident today in the Four-fifths World and increasingly in the “over/developed” world—great numbers of people in thrall to the dominant order, the Empire, whose Promethean sense of self, coupled with its spiritual naïveté, aggression, cruelty and assumed godly authority over the land, threaten a terrible retribution (Rev. 16:5-6).⁶⁷

Additional Helpful Works

Papers and Articles

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⁶⁴ See Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 6-23 for Gen. 1 links to the *Enuma Elish*. For the full epic see <<https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/>>.

⁶⁵ See, for instance, Gen. 1:22, 29-30, 2:2-3, 8:17, 9:1, 7, 10-17; Ex. 1:7, 16:23, 20:10, 23:12; Lev. 19, 25:1-4 (*cf.* Hos. 4:3), 10; Deut. 5:12; Job 38:1—42:6; Pss. 19:1-6, 29, 41:2, 96:11-12, 104 (*cf.* Gen.1), 139:13-14, 148; Prov. 8:31; Eccl. 3:19-20; Ws. 7:17, 24—8:1, 13:5; Isa. 11:6-10, 17:6, 32:15-17, 37:24, 65:25; Mt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:19-23; Col. 1:15-20. See words of Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534-72) in J. Sacks, “Mending the World”, *Jewish Political Studies Review* 25, 3/4 (2013), pp. 110. Also S. Berman, “Jewish Environmental Values” quoted in Vogel, *ibid.*, p. 70. And N. Gregersen, “The Idea of Creation and the Theory of Autopoietic Processes”, *Zygon* 33, 3 (1998), esp. pp. 334, 347-51 but also p. 348.

⁶⁶ See Gen. 1:26; Deut. 20:19, 22:6; Ps. 145; Isa. 24:1, 5-6; Jer. 3:2.

⁶⁷ See W. Berry, *The Gift of Good Land* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009 [1981]), p. 290.

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