

To see a world in a grain of sand  
and heaven in a wild flower  
Hold infinity in the palms of your hand  
and eternity in an hour.

-William Blake

How is this eco-theology? Ponder the poem and I think you will find it captures the essence. (When you like a flower, just pluck it; When you love a flower, water it daily.)

There are many names for the Creator: I am going to use the name of "God."

Will you take a moment and imagine what you think God's dream is for our world?  
Are you a bit cynical? Are we a bit cynical? You may have images of the brutalities of the world, the human devastation, man's inhumanity to man,  
We continue historically with homicides, genocides, biocide and is it possible?  
GEOCIDE. We often conveniently forget that the self-contained planet we live on supports us less and less— as we continue on our environmentally destructive path.

So what could God be thinking?!!

What is the dream of the earth?

What is our role?

What is the role of the church?

Is God thinking, "OK, you guys. I did the creation. Ball in your court!"?

We *are* in community with the earth. We *are* part of the Cosmos. The molecules of your body are the same molecules that make up the nebulae, that burn inside the stars themselves. We are star stuff. (Victor Terbiu )

Human star stuff appeared on this earth at a very late stage of creation as we know it ...10 billion years of existence, another 4 billion for earth to appear. If you scale chronological history down to the span of one year, with the Big Bang on January 1, then our species, Homo Sapiens doesn't appear until 11:59 PM on December 31, and the Bible, the church, theology as we know it did not appear until the last nanosecond of Dec. 31.

Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr says "I can't believe that God had nothing to say until the last nanosecond."

As both Paul and Thomas Aquinas say, God has been revealing God's love since the beginning through the natural world. This is God's love in action.

“Acknowledging the intrinsic value and beauty of creation, elements, plants and animals is a major paradigm shift for most Western and cultural Christians.” and

“Nature itself is the primary Bible” says Richard Rohr.

Earth is not as it was and always will be. Earth is in evolution, as we are, as is the Cosmos, and **our theology is in evolution.**

*We-are-interconnected* and our theology is or should be recognizing that!

**\*\*Ecology**, remember, is the study of the relationships of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. Eco-theology is about *expanding our self-centered worldview to get to something more holy, more intimate*. It’s not God out there, but God in here... God relating to us, relating us together, relating to all things.

Recognizing the interrelatedness of the earth, God, us, the Cosmos, the interdependency we have with each other; this is Eco-Theology. In Bill Plotkin’s book Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World, he states:

“We are summoned to become fully human. We must mature into people who are, first and foremost, citizens of Earth and residents of the universe, and our identity and core values must be recast accordingly.”

Joanna Macy, author of World as Lover World as Self: Courage for Global Justice and Ecological Renewal and Molly Young Brown speak of our era as **the Great Turning**, you might say a paradigm shift, and “is now germinating that sustainable society on which the future depends.” If there is to be a livable world for those who come after us, it will be because we have managed to make the transition from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life-Sustaining Society. This will take, and we are already seeing, countless actions in defense of life (do we see this escalating?) in fresh perceptions of our mutual belonging in the living body of Earth, bold new perceptions deriving from both science and spirituality,

**God IS all things**, each thing revealing some aspect of God’s presence:

God is greater than the whole of our universe, and  
inter-penetrates all things,  
is community,  
is relationship.

We (all things) are all in relationship with one another. However, as concerns the human-earth community, these relations are out of balance.

What- can **-we** -do? And we must do something...or we will be fooling ourselves sitting on [an oasis of ineffective hope](#), as Episcopal Priest Cynthia Bourgeault says.

From the voice of Thich Nhat Hahn:

**"What do we most need to save our world?**

**What we most need to do is to hear within us (heart) the sounds of the earth crying."**

Are we listening...with our **hearts**?

**Are we not yearning for wholeness, for relationship? (Hidden Life of Trees)**

Cynthia Bourgeault said, "Practice yearning by constantly rekindling your desire through seeking, study, and devotion. Notice who and what pulls you. Honor the fluid, boundless, and timeless qualities of this faculty. Allow yourself to reach for fulfillment." And take action. Don't sit on that oasis of wishful thinking.

She advocates involvement through community. So what is the role of the church - I like her description taken from a monk that the church is a plural "me" when she quotes a monk as saying **the plural of egoic is "wegoic"**.

She brings Teilhard in to say Teilhard's vision is that every new level of consciousness needs a new body, a new form, so his idea is that if we are going to move to a new level of consciousness, [it is not going to be by a whole bunch of individual attainments](#). Humanity has the capacity to [organically form a new body](#) that can hold and bring forth a new level of consciousness that speaks to our time.

During the last 70-80 years, we were on a "forward" roll —to bigger and better lives build around possessions, and, let's face it, greed. It was our American right. And if we were religious, we based our religion on thankfulness for the plentitude of life. Not much later, 50? years ago, people realized on a greater and greater scale, that unless the human race listens to the "voices of the first world," then the voices of the human cultures that lived in naked and reverent intimacy with nature, may die out...and are. More and more we see, that this is a very feasible possibility for all voices. For our own. Now we are paying attention!

Berry states that we are moving into a new mythic age, that a new paradigm of what it is to be human is emerging. He speaks of new values determined by human sensitivity in our responses to the urgent plight of the world.

Berry is not speaking of the human dream, but with the earth itself and its inherent powers to bring forth this marvelous “display of beauty in unending profusion.”

Berry’s reminds us of the awe, the deep feeling of adoration we have in our connection to the earth, as an integral part of our being as part of creation.

There is a primordial feeling as part of the primordial design that Berry says is perhaps is the original dream of the earth. He contrasts the “grimy world before us” to the existence still of the sun shining “radiantly over planet Earth, the aspen leaves shimmering in the evening breeze, the coo of the Mourning Dove and the mist that deepens the fragrance of the honeysuckle. And that maybe in these moments, we glimpse the primordial design, we participate in the dream of the earth.”

It is this awe, adoration...it is love...that is the foundation of authentic religion.

Love is at the core of all beings. When you know this, as Thomas Berry says, the world becomes **“a communion of subjects more than a collection of objects.”**

Richard Rohr adds that when you love something, you grant it soul, you see its soul, and you let its soul touch yours.

**You have to love something deeply to know its soul.**

Berry and Rohr are both saying that we resonate with the earth, we can feel that resonance, that feeling of awe and wonder and of love. Anyone get stuck on FB watching videos of nature’s wonders: of a turtle entangled in a plastic bag, swimming to a boat and the fishermen untangling it; hunters chopping at a tree to release a young deer; the delight of a dog greeting his master as she returns from the service. Or —have you lost track of time immersed in planting your garden, or looking at the sun setting over the ocean, smelling the fragrance of the rain in the forest, hugging a tree, watching lambs frolicking in the field, witnessing a birth? This loving feeling could be from serving in the soup kitchen, holding the hand of a lost child, visiting the aged.

Acknowledging the intrinsic value and beauty of creation, living in harmony with all of creation, taking action in defense of life and in fresh perceptions of our mutual belonging to the living body of Earth—

This is the bold new perception and it is derived from both science and spirituality. This is Eco-Theology: (repeat) The study of relationships of organisms to one another and to their physical surrounds. It is inclusive, mutual belonging. It is unveiling our worldview to get to something more holy, more intimate. It is expanding our vision from God *out there* to God *in here*.

In the humble practice of the Ojibway people in N America, I end with this prayer:

Sacred One,  
Teach us love, compassion, and honor  
That we may heal the earth  
And heal each other.

My words are tied in one  
With the great mountains,  
With the great rocks,  
With the great trees,  
In one with my body  
And my heart,  
Do you all help me  
With supernatural power,  
And you, Day,  
And you, Night,  
All of you see me  
One with this world!  
- from a Yokuts prayer

## **Q and A**

BLAKE:  
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and heaven in a wild flower  
Hold infinity in the palms of your hand  
and eternity in an hour.

The value and dignity of an object: a grain of sand or a wild flower, the mountains, rocks, and trees...It is not the object itself, but your relationship to the object that matters, that transforms the object to "subject." That is relationship, and that is eco-theology.