



God's Earth – Our Home

Study 2

*Rediscovering our creatureliness
– responsibility, interconnection and love*

“Together with our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes: “by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory”, and indeed, “the Lord rejoices in all his works” (Ps.104:31). By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws, for “the Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Prov.3:19)... The ancient stories [of Cain and Abel, and of Noah], full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others... The God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (69,70,73)

Comment

Broadly speaking theologians have understood humanity’s relation to creation in terms of three models:

- The Dominion Model
- The Stewardship Model
- The Community of Creation or *Kinship* Model

All three models affirm God brought a 'good' creation into existence – both inanimate and sensate, human and animal, seen and unseen. All find warrant in scripture.

The Dominion Model sees humans as the head of creation, set apart and distinct. They are made in God's image to exercise sovereign rule on God's behalf – they represent God's authority over the creation. Creation is *for* humans, all is given for them to enjoy and control. This world view objectifies nature by seeing it as 'out there', as 'other', an object to serve humanity's needs.

The Stewardship Model still sees humans as central and representing God to creation but as guardians and gardeners, who are tasked with unfolding the creation within limits and in obedience to God's Word. The world belongs to God. God lives in his world and interacts with it so humans are to treat it with respect and care. They too are made of dust like the rest of creation and are creatures before God, yet as image bearers of God they have a special place and responsibility.

The emphasis in this world view is upon *obedience* and duty. Humans have a *vocation*, a *mandate*, before God to care for the rest of creation.

The Community of Creation (or Kinship) Model springs very much from St. Francis' creation mysticism and thought, and can be seen running throughout Pope Francis thought, though especially in his second chapter.

In this model the emphasis is on humanity's interconnection with the rest of creation which exists to give glory to God. The whole creation is in communication with God who simultaneously discloses himself through creation.

Like the Stewardship model the Kinship model recognises we are made from the earth, that we share this origin in common, only we are God breathed – this is what make us the same even as we are different from the rest of creation. The Kinship model says, “we *are* creation” and starts from there.

This world view is easy to romanticise yet at the heart of Francis' thinking is a strong sense of God as both creator and redeemer. “If we have a keen sense of the creator then we have an equally keen sense of how everything in the creation is connected, related, integrated – we are ‘ontological siblings’, we are all ‘relatives’ in the deepest sense – in Francis' language, “brother sun, sister moon”. (+Barron)

If we start from there, then our relationship to creation will be one that springs from joy and love, devotion and filial care. In the face of an “aggressively anthropocentric modernity that sees nature as a commodity to manipulate... this is a radically different way of being and acting as a biblically formed people”. (+Barron) This is Pope Francis' central idea.

Tasks

- *Quickly* read together the scriptures in the table attached (these are all taken from Pope Francis' references).
- Thinking of the three different models of creation, *quickly* decide together which blocks of verses belong in which category/ categories?

Ways of Understanding Humanity's Relationship With Creation

Tick the box(es) for where you think each passage lies

Scripture	Dominion	Stewardship	Community/ Kinship
Genesis 1:26-2:1			
Genesis 2:4-7			
Genesis 2:8-17			
Genesis 5:1-2			
Genesis 6:1-7			
Genesis 9:1-3			
Genesis 9:8-11			
Deuteronomy 10:14; Leviticus 25:23			
Psalm 148:3-6			
Deuteronomy 22:4,6			
Exodus 23:12			
Psalm 139:1-18			
Matthew 6:25-34			
Romans 8:19-21			
Revelation 21:1-5a; 22:1-2			

Discuss the following together

- In what way is the creation 'good'? (Genesis 1:31)
- To what extent do you think Jesus' modelling of Kingship, faithfulness and being human can inform our 'reading' of these creation texts? (ref. Matthew 27:27-37; John 13:3-17; Philippians 2:3-11; Colossians 1:19-20)
- What model(s) of creation do you find most useful in understanding your/ our place in creation – why?