

Reflections on our Place in Creation

Compiled in *Reflections on the Nature of God*, Michael Reagan, Ed., 2004 and *Inside the Mind of God*, Michael Reagan, Ed., 2002, both by Templeton Foundation Press

Instead of picturing God as a medieval monarch on a marble throne, imagine God as the living awareness in the space between the atoms, the “empty” space that makes up about 99% of the universe. Thinking of God that way gets us past some of the great theological divides of the past. Is God immanent or transcendent, internal or external, composed or compassionate? Like the question of whether the atom is wave or particle, the answer is: yes. [Tom Mahon, contemporary writer on technology & spirituality]

The great mystery is not that we should have been thrown down here at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars; it is that from our very prison we should draw, from our own selves, images powerful enough to deny our nothingness. [Andre Malraux – 1901-1976 – French author, adventurer, statesman]

The forms and creeds of religion change, but the sentiment of religion – the wonder and reverence and love we feel in the presence of the inscrutable universe – persists. [John Burroughs, 1837-1921, American naturalist/essayist]

I simply haven't the nerve to imagine a being, a force, a cause which keeps the planets revolving in their orbits, and then suddenly stops in order to give me a bicycle with three speeds. [Quentin Crisp, b. Dennis Charles Pratt, 1908-1999, English writer/actor]

I am the Eternal One, there is none else. I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I am the Eternal One who does all these things. [Isaiah 45:6-7]

Behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present: one, and not compound, it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us. [Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882, American essayist/poet]

Matter is not simply inert or dead, but a numinous reality with both a physical and spiritual dimension. As self-reflective creatures, we need to realize our responsibility for the continuation of the ancient and awesome evolutionary process. [Father Thomas Berry, b. 1914, Catholic Priest, ecotheologian]

When you walk on the Earth, imagine that this is the skin of a live being. Imagine the flow of waters in streams and rivers as the blood of this being. Imagine the air you breathe as her breath. [Will Brinton, contemporary environmental scientist]

The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. And listen to this: the human is derivative. The planet is primary. [Father Thomas Berry b. 1914, Catholic Priest, ecotheologian]

It would be excessive boldness for anyone to limit and restrict the Divine power and wisdom to some particular fancy of his own. [Galileo Galilei, 1564-1642, Italian astronomer]

God is in the prepositions – beyond, among, within, beneath. [Sharon Daloz Parks, Contemporary writer on spirituality]

Humans need elements of the natural to make and keep life human. A society attuned to artifacts forgets creation: maybe that's New York versus the Rocky Mountains. What does it profit us to gain the world only to lose it? To consume the world and lose soul in the tradeoff? Nature invites us to think of our sources, of the Great Source, more than of resources. The most authentic wilderness emotion is the sense of the sublime. We get transported by forces awe-full and overpowering, by the signature of time and eternity. [Holmes Rolston, III, Professor of Philosophy, Colorado State University]

God is like a mirror. The mirror never changes, but everybody who looks at it sees something different. [Rabbi Harold Kushner, Contemporary Author]

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift. [Albert Einstein, 1879-1955, Theoretical Physicist]

There is a story I once heard about a young boy who went out to the woods day after day. His father took note of his strange habit and asked his child, "My son, why do you go out to the woods each day?" The son responded, "I go there to find God." At this the father gently reprimanded his child, "Don't you know that God is the same everywhere?" The son replied, "Yes, Father, but I am not the same everywhere." [Unknown]

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in. [George Washington Carver, 1864-1943, Agricultural extension educator]

All are but parts of one stupendous whole Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.
[Alexander Pope, 1688-1744, English Poet]

God is constantly creating, in us through us, and with us, and to co-create with God is our human calling.
[Madeleine L'Engle, 1918-2007, American writer]

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we will harness for God the energies of love. And then, for the second time in the history of the world, humanity will discover fire.
[Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1881-1955, French philosopher, Jesuit priest, paleontologist, geologist]

The more I know, the less I understand
All the things I thought I knew, I'm learning again
I've been trying to get down to the heart of the matter
But my will gets weak and my thoughts seem to scatter
But I think it's about forgiveness, forgiveness. [Don Henley, Songwriter/Performer]

We may explore the universe and find ourselves, or we may explore ourselves and find the universe. It matters not which of these paths we choose. [Diana Robertson]

The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes. [Unknown]

There are a limitless number of different sciences, but without one basic science, that is, what is the meaning of life and what is good for the people, all other forms of knowledge and art become idle and harmful entertainment.
[Leo Tolstoy, 1828-1910, Russian writer]

Wisdom begins in wonder. [Socrates, 469 BCE-399 BCE, Greek philosopher]

Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't. [Richard Bach b. 1936, American writer]

People are like stained-glass windows: they sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within.
[Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D., 1926-2004, Swiss-born psychiatrist]

We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. [Stephen Covey, b. 1932, Author and Founder, Covey Leadership Center]

What lies behind us and what lies before are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. [Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882, American essayist/poet]

I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence, I can reach for; perfection is God's business. [Michael J. Fox, b. 1961, Canadian/American actor]

Despise no one and calling nothing impossible, for there is no one who doesn't have his or her hour and there is no thing that does not have its place. [The Talmud]

On our Place and Role in Creation – Rabbi Larry Karol

Inspired by *The Splendor of Creation*, by Ellen Bernstein

Eternal One, on this Birthday of the World, we approach creation with wonder, gratitude awe.

You have given us light to see the path before us and darkness for peace and contemplation on the next steps to take on our journey.

You have enveloped the earth with a blanket that enables animals and plants to live, protecting us from the airless vacuum just beyond our planet.

You have made our steps firm upon the earth and given us insight and ability that allow us to move upon waves and streams and through the air high above us.

You have taught us about our own diversity through the many species and colors which catch our gaze and our interest, all the while reminding us that much of what is inside reveals the similarity and symmetry within the world. You have given us a sacred task – to be responsible for caring for the world that we did not create as if we had created it, remembering all the while that we are part of it.

And on this New Year, and other days when we mark sacred time, may we be moved by the peace of the day to preserve the serenity of nature and to be partners with each other in maintaining the well-being of our world so that it can sustain us.

Be with us as we approach this sacred mission together.

Amen.