

MOTIVATION

What motivates acting on human-forced climate change?

Can religious faith motivate mitigating human acceleration of the climate crisis?

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World Affairs Seminar

Climate Change: Youth Take Action
Carroll University, Waukesha, Wisconsin
28 June 2023

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Searching for expressions of faith that might motivate living responsibly within Earth

Promising expressions of faith in the Christian theological tradition that should motivate Christians

Expressions of faith in the major world religions that should motivate adherents of those religions

SEARCHING FOR EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH THAT MIGHT MOTIVATE LIVING RESPONSIBLY WITHIN EARTH

Late 1970s—A plethora of ecological problems, many in the Great Lakes Basin

Science Advisory Board of the International Joint Commission's
interest in involving the public in problem solving

Recommendation to create a code of ethics, involving all
stakeholders—including religious communities



Pew Research surveys disclosing 84% of people worldwide identify with a
“religion”

My quest to examine the Christian theological tradition

PROMISING EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH IN THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION THAT SHOULD MOTIVATE ADDRESSING ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Sacramentality of Creation
Goodness of Creation
Beauty of Creation
Integrity of Creation
Giftedness of Creation
Creation's Praise for God
Kinship of Creatures
Restrained Use of Creatures
Living Virtuously
Loving Creation

CHALLENGE

Applying Concepts in Pre-scientific Theological Sources to Our Current Understanding of the World

Ancient Hebrew Worldview

Ancient Hebrew Conception of the Universe

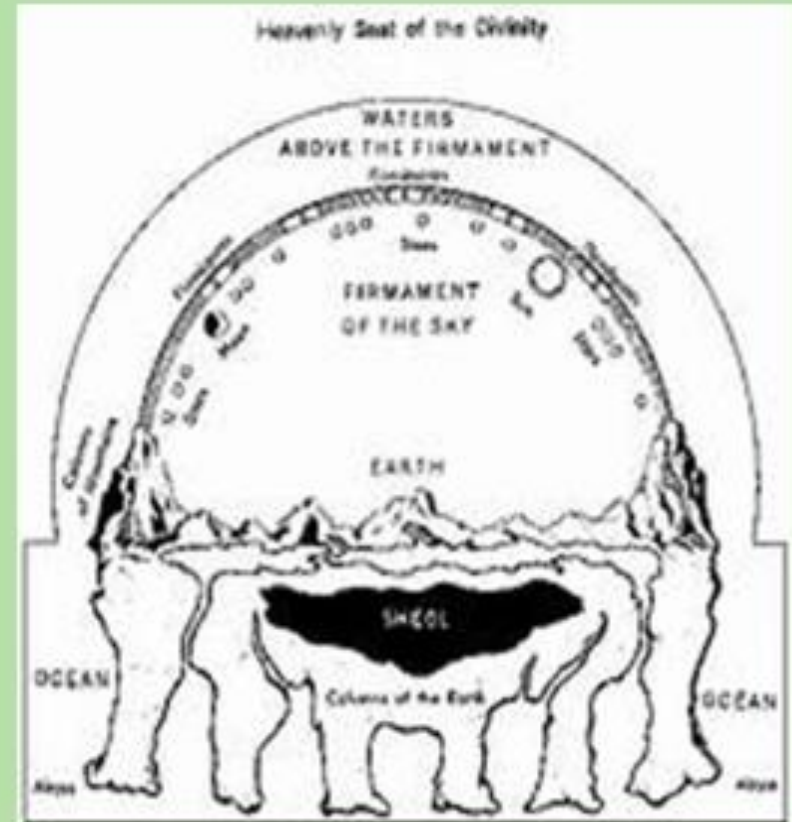
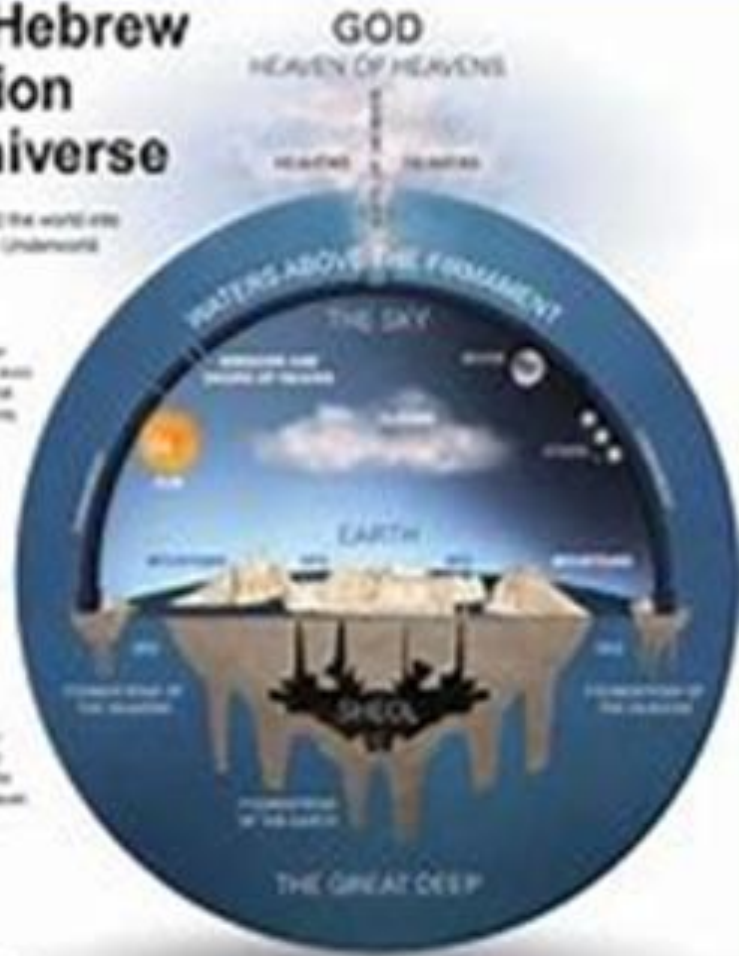
The ancient Israelites divided the world into Heaven, Earth, Sea, and the Underworld.

The upper firmament is a solid ceiling or foundation, perhaps made of gold and silver, held in the air. The sun, moon, and stars are in the sky, held in their orbits.

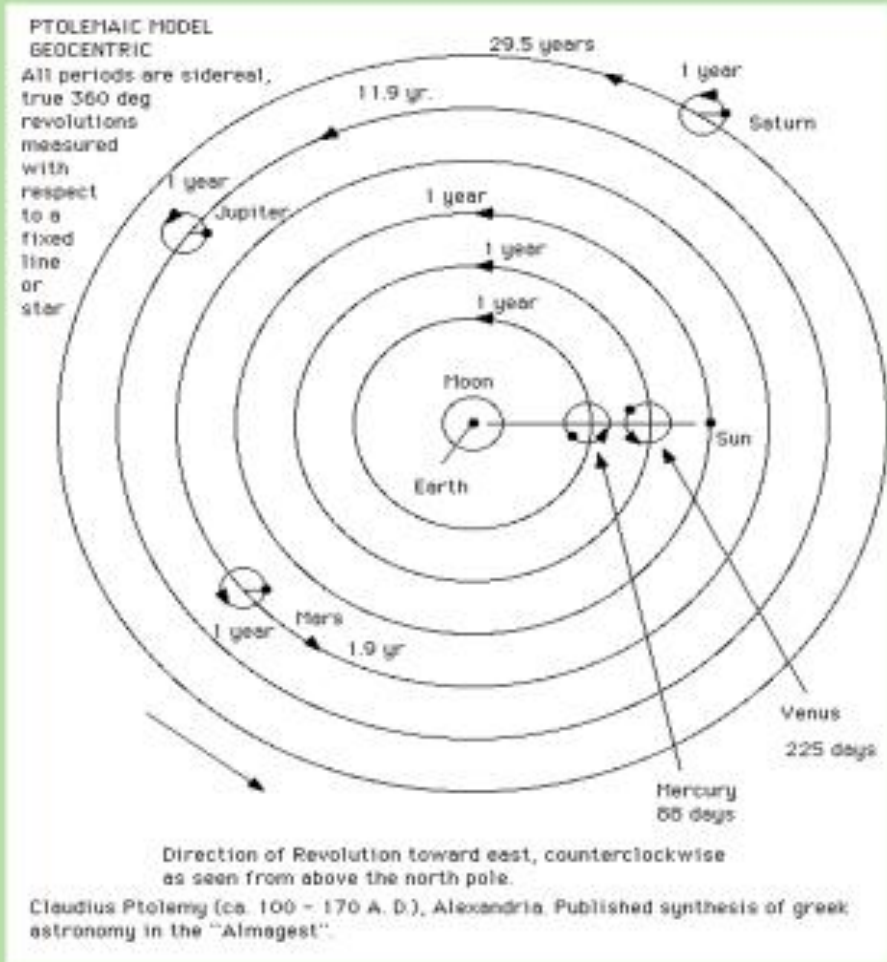
The earth was divided into the flat top of the earth, the mountains, and the sea. The earth was the only land between the sea and the sky.

The underworld (Sheol) was a valley of darkness, held in the air. It was a place of punishment, and a place of rest for the dead. It was the realm of the dead.

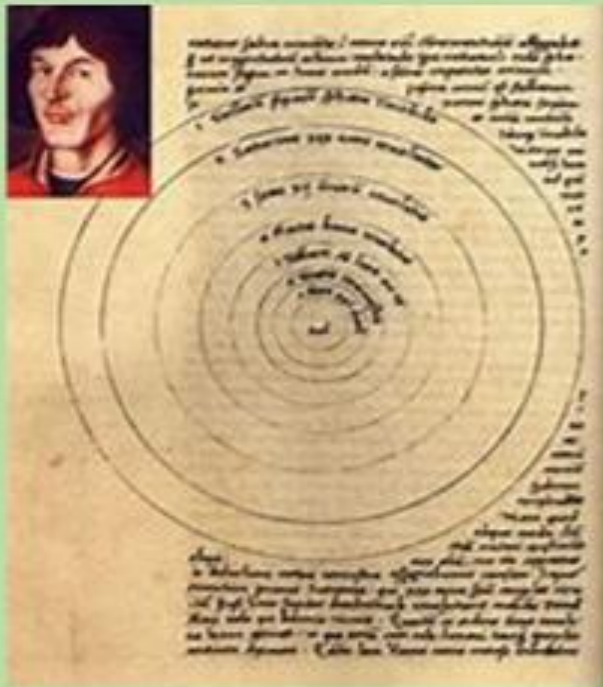
Illustration by [unreadable] © [unreadable]



Ptolemaic Worldview: Patristic-Medieval Period



Copernican Worldview: Early Scientific



Current Scientific Understanding—Webb's First Deep Field



<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/missions/james-webb-space-telescope/in-depth/#:~:text=The%20James%20Webb%20Space%20Telescope%20is%20an%20infrared,universe%20and%20to%20see%20stars%20forming%20planetary%20systems.>



The Milky Way
Crater Lake OR
Photo by Daniel Agee

<https://medium.com/vantage/taking-photos-of-the-milky-way-is-easy-53efdd091bc8>



Our Solar System

hdwpro.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Amazing-Solar-system.jpg



EARTH
Our Shared
Home

<http://www.bwallpapers.com/wallpaper/the-earth-13192/>

MEETING THIS CHALLENGE

A “Critical-Creative Method” for Retrieving Meaningful Concepts for Application Today

Select promising themes grounded in faith in God who made the world possible and sustains its existence.

Recognize the differences in the biblical-patristic-medieval world view with our current scientific understanding of the world.

Rethink to concepts informed by our current worldview to assure coherency and relevance today.

Identify behavior trajectories— ethical implications.

CHRISTIAN FAITH PERSPECTIVE

God created a good and orderly world that is totally dependent upon God for its existence, God has a purpose for the world, human creatures are responsible to God for how they function within God's creation, and God's manifestation in Jesus the Christ demonstrates how Christians should function in the world (the Doctrine of Creation).

EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH THAT SHOULD MOTIVATE ACTION

"ORTHOPRAXIS"

Goodness of creation – should motivate valuing other species, abiota, ecosystems intrinsically

Beauty of Creation – should motivate appreciating them and their harmonious interactions

Sacramentality of Creation – should motivate venerating them through which God's presence can be experienced and know about God's character

Integrity of Creation – should motivate cooperating with them for mutual flourishing

Giftedness of Creation – should motivate receiving them with gratitude to God

Kinship of Creatures – should motivate living companionably with them in the journey of life

Living virtuously – should motivate living prudently, justly, moderately, courageously, compassionately

Loving God's creation – should motivate all the above for love of God and one's neighbor now and into the future

Source: "Ecological Ethics" in *St Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology*, 2023
<https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/EcologicalEthics>

Application to human-forced climate change, the decline in biological diversity, pollution of waters and lands, destruction of ecological systems, and many more ongoing problems requires particularizing with evidence locally to globally.

Examples of applications in Schaefer, *Theological Foundation for Environmental Ethics* (Georgetown University Press, 2009)

EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH IN THE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS THAT SHOULD MOTIVATE ACTION BY ADHERENTS

Judaism

Islam

Hinduism

Jainism

Buddhism

Native Americans

Sources at Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology, <https://fore.yale.edu/>

JUDAISM'S BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

God created and sustains the world for God's sake, the Earth is God's and is totally dependent upon God for its existence, the order of the world manifest's God's presence, nothing in the world is superfluous, and followers of Judaism are in a privileged place in creation through their relationship with God as covenantal partners.

JUDAIC ORTHOPRAXIS

Accept responsibility as God's covenantal partners for protecting, caring for, managing, and repairing/healing God's Earth/*TIKKUN OLAM* so it remains fertile/flourishes.

Show compassion for animals by feeding them before feeding oneself and avoid causing them to suffer by following the principle of *BAL TASHIT*/do not destroy.

Sanctify SPACE through acts consecrated to God (e.g., cultivating trees), sanctify TIME by celebrations at particular times of the year (e.g., *SUKKUT* for experiencing God through nature and making commitments to preserve nature as a sacred locale of God's presence and *SHEVAT* for celebrating the new year for trees as a symbol of divine reality), and sanctify their BODIES and respect for others' bodies by following the purity code (e.g., care, production and consumption of food and cleansing the body as a dwelling of the soul).

Practice social justice through SABBATH--the 7th year of rest for land and return to its original owners.

ISLAM'S BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

The entirety of creation is utterly dependent upon God for its existence, internally self-sustaining according to laws of nature that are God's immutable commands/*AMR*, and full of signs/*AYAT* of God's oneness, mercy, and generosity/*TAWHEED*; human creatures are intended by God to serve as trustees/*KHALIFA* of God's creation who are accountable to God on the Day of Reckoning for how they functioned.

ISLAMIC ORTHOPRAXIS

Value intrinsically the signs/*AYAT* of God that constitute the physical creation by not degrading or destroying them.

Humbly acknowledge that Muslims are trustees/*KHALIFA* of God's creation, strive to maintain its unity with its diverse flora and fauna, and obey God's laws of nature/*AMR* that can be discerned by studying the world.

Follow the principle of self-injury/*ZULM AL-NAFS* by avoid damaging, offending, and destroying the balance/order of the natural environment established by God's laws/*AMR* because they will also be damaging, offending, and destroying themselves.

Acknowledge accountability to God on the Day of Reckoning/*QIYAMA*H for how their trusteeship of God's world has been exercised for which they will be rewarded or punished accordingly.

Follow practical instructions/*SHARI'A* by respecting no development zones, conserving resources, attributing rights to animals, safeguarding water, and avoiding overgrazing/abuse of the land.

HINDUISM'S BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

BRAHMAN is the ultimate reality that is eternal, infinite, and the source from which the world/Mother Earth emanates, embraces everything that exists, and pulsates throughout all living beings as their *ATMAN*/animating spirit.

HINDU ORTHOPRAXIS

Revere Mother Earth and the sacrality of all types of living beings.

Avoid thinking of themselves as privileged or authoritative over other species and ecological systems and instead embrace the principle of equality of all living entities because they are permeated with *BRAHMAN*.

Demonstrate their belief in *KARMA*, the transmigration of souls/spirits by (i) exercising their duties to animals into whose forms humans had been or will become if they have not accumulated sufficient moral energy and (ii) practicing *AHIMSA*/non-violence towards more-than-human others.

Improve their *KARMA* by practicing the rules of conduct for living as specified by *DHARMA* including (i) always acting for the good of the world, (ii) maintaining proper sanitation, (iii) avoiding pollution of air and water, (iv) planting trees, and (v) assuring ecological space for all Hindus of the various castes.

JAINISM'S BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

All that exists constitutes a storied reality of an earthly realm of living entities-- from a clod of dirt or a drop of water to vegetables, animals, and humans--all of which have a life force suffusing them/*JIVA* that leaves bodies when they die and seeks new sites depending on the *KARMA* accrued in the previous life (reincarnation). Humans are individually responsible for their *JIVA* and must respect all other entities and avoid harming them/*AHIMSA* because their sensations* clog their *JIVA*.

- *sense of touch possessed by ground, water, fire, air bodies, microorganisms, and plants
- sense of taste possessed by worms, leeches, oysters, and snails
- sense of smell possessed by insects and spiders
- sense of sight possessed by butterflies, flies and bees
- sense of hearing possessed by birds, reptiles, mammals, and humans

JAIN ORTHOPRAXIS

Practice *AHIMSA*/non-violence toward all entities of the earthly realm.

Be kind to all forms of life, showing compassion for them, protecting them from harm, and not hunting for sport.

Eat foods that have only one sense--vegetables and milk products.

Practice self-restraint by living a life of moderation--meeting needs, curbing desires, and fasting for self-purification of one's *JIVA*.

Avoid wastefulness.

BUDDHISM'S BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

DHARMA is the sacred moral order of reality within which all entities (living and inanimate) are interdependent and experience suffering/*DUKKHA* from which the living wish to escape wherein life transmigrates from one body to another according to the conduct of the human and the extent to which the person follows the Eight-fold Path toward enlightenment/*NIRVANA* and emancipation from suffering.

BUDDHIST ORTHOPRAXIS

Treat all living and non-living entities with the reverence that is due to them as constituents of the sacred moral order of which they are integral, interdependent parts.

Practice **EMPATHETIC COMPASSION** toward all sentient life by acting non-violently and kindly toward them.

Value intrinsically and equally all forms of life and Earth because they are all connected in the *KARMA* continuum and have the possibility of reaching *NIRVANA*/emancipation from suffering.

Practice **NON-ACQUISITIVENESS** by living simple lifestyles, taking in moderation only what is needed to support their lives, and showing restraint in their endeavors.

Provide for needy humans and other beings justly in the *KARMA* continuum.

Follow the Eightfold Path of right views, intentions, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditational attainment.

Consider becoming a *BODHISATVA*--one who is enlightened but foregoes nirvana to help others until all (human and other living entities) are saved from suffering.

NATIVE AMERICANS' BASIC FAITH PERSPECTIVE

The universe is a living creative process that involves all existing entities grounded in a mother/father or grandmother/grandfather often depicted as animals or forces/WAKAN; Earth is Mother to all things (earth/rocks, air, land, water, and all species including humans) who are her children related to one another as brothers and sisters and mutually dependent upon her for their flourishing; harming Mother Earth and her family means harming themselves as members of her family and siblings to all.

NATIVE AMERICANS' BASIC ORTHOPRAXIS

Love, respect, and show GRATITUDE to Mother Earth as her CHILDREN to whom she gifts the necessities upon which they are utterly dependent (*WEMITALI*).

Respect and treat kindly all children of Mother Earth (earth, rocks, air, land, water, plants, and animals) as brothers and sisters/relatives who are members of our FAMILY.

Use wisely the gifts that Mother Earth provides, thanking her and her gifts directly for their use.

Think about your relatedness to members of your inclusive family with whom you constitute Mother Earth and avoid harmful acts on them because any harm done to her and her children will harm you as part of Mother Earth (self-injury).

Show HUMILITY for the human place within Mother Earth as children among many other children (from rocks and soil to increasingly complex species to the stars) and not over, above, superior to, controlling, or managing her and her children.

Indigenous Faith Communities throughout the World

Sources at <https://fore.yale.edu/World-Religions/Indigenous>

CHALLENGE OF ORTHOPRAXIS:

Acting on One's Faith to Minimize Human-Forced Changes
in the Climate Locally to Globally

