



Talking points

Eco-justice and the integrity of creation

- 25.01 The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

John Woolman, 1772

- 25.02 Our planet is seriously ill and we can feel the pain. We have been reminded of the many ways in which the future health of the earth is under threat as a result of our selfishness, ignorance and greed. Our earth needs attention, respect, love, care and prayer.

In comfortable Britain we are largely insulated from the effects of the environmental crisis. It is the poor of the world who suffer first.

As a Religious Society of Friends we see the stewardship of God's creation as a major concern. The environmental crisis is at root a spiritual and religious crisis; we are called to look again at the real purpose of being on this earth, which is to till it and keep it so as to reveal the glory of God for generations to come.

It is a stony road ahead but our faith will uphold us; the power to act is God's power which is mediated through each of us as we give and receive support one from another. We can all listen if we will to the sounds of the earth, tuning into it with joy.

London Yearly Meeting, 1988

- 25.04 All species and the Earth itself have interdependent roles within Creation. Humankind is not the species, to whom all others are subservient, but one among many. All parts, all issues, are inextricably intertwined. Indeed the web of creation could be described as of three-ply thread: wherever we touch it we affect justice and peace and the health of all everywhere. So all our testimonies, all our Quaker work, all our Quaker lives are part of one process, of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful Creation – the Kingdom of God.

Audrey Urry, 1994

- 25.09 I want to list ten controlling principles for the outward expression of simplicity. They should not be viewed as laws but as one attempt to flesh out the meaning of simplicity into twentieth-century life. First, buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. Second, reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. Third, develop a habit of giving things away. De-accumulate. Fourth, refuse to be propagandised by the custodians of modern gadgetry. Fifth, learn to enjoy things without owning them. Sixth, develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. Seventh, look with a healthy scepticism at all 'buy now, pay later' schemes. Eighth, obey Jesus' injunction about plain, honest speech. Ninth, reject anything that will breed the oppression of others. Tenth, shun whatever would distract you from your main goal.

Richard J Foster, 1979

25.10 Our adoption of the [World Council of Churches'] concern for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation grows from our faith and cannot be separated from it. It challenges us to look again at our lifestyles and reassess our priorities and makes us realise the truth of Gandhi's words: 'Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.' The earth's resources must be conserved and shared more equitably and, as we are an integral part of creation, this is our responsibility.

London Yearly Meeting, 1989

25.11 As consumers, producers and investors, or as travellers, readers and campaigners we can be active in support of the Two Thirds World. Our use of energy connects us directly to the greenhouse effect and to world food supplies. Our bank interest rates link us to the debt burdens which are forcing many countries to destroy their environment to produce cash crops and foreign currency. Our ability to acquire knowledge gives us the chance to act as a mouthpiece on behalf of the environment and the poor who are suffering most from its destruction. Indeed we have the responsibility to use that knowledge wisely.

Ruth Tod, 1990

25.13 That the sweat and tedious labour of the farmer, early and late, cold and hot, wet and dry, should be converted into the pleasure of a small number of men – that continued severity should be laid on nineteen parts of the land to feed the inordinate lusts and delicate appetites of the twentieth, is so far from the will of the great Governor of the world, ... [it] is wretched and blasphemous.

William Penn, 1669

25.14 We are building towards the climax of crisis. The spiritual crisis is folding into the ecological crisis and the ecological crisis is folding into the economic crisis. As Christians, it seems to me, we are now required to critically assess the capital driven market economy and identify it as a false religion, a fabulously productive but ultimately destructive system bringing closure on God's goodness in creation and bringing a creeping atheism to the soul. To look this system straight in the eye and call it to account is a critical test of Biblical faith.

Challenging market economics with a Biblical sense of the goodness of God in creation is to join a spiritual struggle. Faith in God, solidarity with the suffering poor and all other forms of life demands that we take a stand and say, 'This destruction must stop.' We must be perfectly clear about the implications of undertaking this responsibility. It is more than just setting up household recycling bins, growing organic vegetables or riding a bike to work. It is more than a talking job. It is a renovation which will change everything: the way we do business, the way we eat, the way we travel, the houses we build, the products and services we can expect and the prices we pay for them, the way we feel about trees and the way we worship God.

Keith Helmuth, 1990