



Encountering God in Creation

A simple guide



CORACLE

A Poem to begin...

86. from 'Aurora Lee'

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

TRUTH, so far, in my book;—the truth which draws
Through all things upwards,—that a twofold world
Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural things
And spiritual,—who separates those two
In art, in morals, or the social drift
Tears up the bond of nature and brings death,
Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,
Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men,
Is wrong, in short, at all points. We divide
This apple of life, and cut it through the pips,—
The perfect round which fitted Venus' hand
Has perished as utterly as if we ate
Both halves. Without the spiritual, observe,
The natural's impossible,—no form,
No motion: without sensuous, spiritual
Is inappreciable,—no beauty or power:
And in this twofold sphere the twofold man
(For still the artist is intensely a man)
Holds firmly by the natural, to reach
The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still
The type with mortal vision, to pierce through,
With eyes immortal, to the antetype
Some call the ideal,—better call the real,
And certain to be called so presently
When things shall have their names. Look long enough
On any peasant's face here, coarse and lined,
You'll catch Antinous somewhere in that clay,
As perfect featured as he yearns at Rome
From marble pale with beauty; then persist,
And, if your apprehension's competent,
You'll find some fairer angel at his back,
As much exceeding him as he the boor,
And pushing him with empyreal disdain
For ever out of sight. Aye, Carrington
Is glad of such a creed: an artist must,
Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common stone
With just his hand, and finds it suddenly
A-piece with and conterminous to his soul.

Why else do these things move him, leaf, or stone?
The bird's not moved, that pecks at a spring-shoot;
Nor yet the horse, before a quarry, a-graze:
But man, the twofold creature, apprehends
The twofold manner, in and outwardly,
And nothing in the world comes single to him,
A mere itself,—cup, column, or candlestick,
All patterns of what shall be in the Mount;
The whole temporal show related royally,
And built up to eterne significance
Through the open arms of God. 'There's nothing great
Nor small', has said a poet of our day,
Whose voice will ring beyond the curfew of eve
And not be thrown out by the matin's bell:
And truly, I reiterate, nothing's small!
No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars;
No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere;
No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;
And (glancing on my own thin, veined wrist),
In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamour of a vehement soul
Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

Preparing our Hearts...

A Prayer for Joy in God's Creation

O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer)

How are you feeling today (physically, emotionally, spiritually)?

Be honest with God about where you are before Him right at this moment.

Hold what comes to you for a minute and ask Him how to respond.

Take a moment to make a confession before God. If it weighs on your soul, now is the time to talk to Him about it.

Tell him, knowing that you can cast all your cares on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). He is asking you to come to him, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, he will give you rest for his yoke is easy, his burden is light (Matt 11:28). Remembering always, even in the midst of our own brokenness, that, “neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God” (Romans 8:39).

As you begin...

Consider Creation, represented in all that you see, and God's authorship of it.

Why would God make it beautiful?

What does it say about the way He loves us?

What about the way He loves you personally?

“God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

Genesis 1:31

Praise

Psalm 104:24, 30-34

How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...

When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever, may the Lord rejoice in his works— he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.

Like the Psalmist, thank the Lord for some of the beautiful, diverse things you see.

Rejoice and be glad in them. Notice what they might reveal to you about God.

Where do you notice the beauty?

Rest

“...look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

Jeremiah 6:16

Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

Psalms 116:7

Find rest and peace in this time with God.

When you start to draw your walk to a close, sit with God beside you for a moment.

Let God speak his peace over you through his very good, very beautiful Creation, which includes you.

Thank the Lord for His presence with you and to ask the Holy Spirit to guide this closing time of reflection and prayer. Thank Him, in advance, for the wisdom and insight He promises to give us when we come to Him in prayer (Jeremiah 29:13; James 1:5).

Reflection Questions

What natural objects, plants, animals, weather, and physical features caught your attention?

Is there something particular you are feeling grateful for right now?

Where have you noticed or seen or felt God around you?

Did you feel barriers to anything you encountered today? Any walls that went up?

Did God speak to you today or show you something? What did he say? What did he show you?

A prayer as you go...

O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals to whom you gave the earth as their home in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to you in song, has been a groan of travail.

May we realize that they live not for us alone but for themselves and for you, and that they love the sweetness of life.

—St. Basil the Great



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