



Ask The Beasts: Darwin And The God Of Love

With Elizabeth Johnson's book as our guide we will explore and deepen our understanding of God's love by looking to the beasts, birds, plants, and fish.

Chapter four - Evolution of the Theory

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"All living and dead organism are profoundly related to each other in one grand natural system, rather than being separate creations related directly to the Creator but not to each other"

This chapter spoke to that the deep connection I feel between the natural world, humans and our Creator. While the a church building can provide a sense of quiet sanctuary imbued with a deep hallowed-ness, a walk through the moss laden trees on a dreary Sunday afternoon does more to enliven my connection with God than a wooden pew will ever be able to provide. This book initially caught my attention because I find that it is through the deepening of my relationship with the natural world that I can deepen my relationship with God. I find God to be so ever-present in the trees, rocks, streams and buzzing insects and if ever I feel disconnected from my Creator a walk through the sacred paths between the trees will ground me in a very tangible way.

This week I have the joy of visiting one of the most sacred forests I've ever known. Mrs. Aull's garden in Englewood Ohio is a sanctuary. Mrs. Aull was a true naturalist, actively observing creation at work and intentionally creating sanctuary, Aullwood Nature Center, for everyone to have a place to become naturalists. As you enter the pathway that winds around the stream-fed pool a wooden sign reads "This is a place where nothing ever happens, where people simply live, where there is sun and slow peacefulness of day following day. Walk gently... and may some of the peace be yours." Each time I see that sign it is a breathtaking reminder to slow down and ground myself in the peace and comfort of the woods. As you walk down the path you are likely to hear a chorus of songbirds, perhaps a few frogs will chime in as the insects hold the melody. If you are lucky you may see a rabbit or a deer. It is in these moments when you have returned to the natural world from which we all came, our interconnected evolutionary history is most tangible.

Darwin was ever consistent on that point. Every being, large or small, is inter-related and interconnected. To me, that means that one cannot exist without the other. And as Johnson points out, we are so interwoven in our evolutionary history that if we were to turn back the clock and start over we would collectively evolve in a very different way. "...life on Earth would be a community with a different genetic history, and likely a different physical appearance." Here is where I find that we struggle as a being, God has created us to be inextricably interwoven with every other living

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~ Aullwood Gardens

creature and yet somehow we have evolved in a way that our existence is now jeopardizing the existence of the beings that we cannot exist without. We have been called through our religious stories to be custodians of this world and to reinforce that point we have been genetically interwoven through all of creation, we have every reason to be active in our environmental and humanitarian stewardship. Jesus' words ring ever so clear, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."(Matthew 24:40). We are called to care for creation and our brothers and sisters in Christ and by doing so we are caring for Christ. When we care for the creation and all her beings we are fulfilling our call from God and ensuring our own evolutionary success.

Questions for Further Discussion:

- How might our interdependence change how we view the world? Would we be able to move from a warring world to a world of cooperation and collaboration for the safety and security of all?
- How might this change our actions as we care for our brothers and sisters around the world?
- How might this change our prayers for peace and justice?

