

## CREATION THEOLOGY

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We need a theology of creation, rooted in the Scriptures. The Bible does give a compelling and sophisticated understanding of the natural world, and of our duty to conserve it - but only if we know where to look. The handful of passages most often cited are not sufficient. There are the creation stories of Genesis 1-3, and there is Paul's declaration in Romans 8 that the sons of God will set the earth free from bondage to decay - but even these familiar texts need a context. 'Consider the lilies of the field', which I have heard used as an 'environment' text, is not about creation theology at all, but about trust. In general, Christians who work in this field are using second hand material, material that has been developed by environmentalists and then lightly baptised and decently dressed up in a few verses of Scripture, verses such as 'Consider the lilies of the field...'. *This will not do; we must offer a characteristically Christian position as the voice of the Church.*

There are no obvious proof texts for a quick fix. There is plenty of biblical material, but we need to go deep into the world view of the biblical writers in order to set familiar texts in their original context. The underlying creation theology is then very clear. One of the biggest problems standing in the way of any Christian theology of creation is created by other Christians, and I have in mind here those who expect imminent rapture and the destruction of this creation. We do need to have something to say to those Christians who regard the pollution of the earth as unimportant, something of concern only for pantheists and pagans, and to those Christians - and there are many such - who regard pollution as a positive sign in that it brings closer the moment when the righteous will be saved and everybody else - and creation itself - will be destroyed. Could we not argue on the same basis that all medical care would be wrong, on the grounds that we are all going to die anyway? Should we not regard disease as a way of hastening the day when we go to be with the Lord? What have we to say in response to such people, and to their citation of biblical texts which support their prediction of gloom for the physical world?

The earliest Christians did have vivid descriptions of the destruction that would accompany the Day of the LORD, when the LORD would return to judge all the living and to establish the Kingdom. St Paul wrote of the each person's work being judged by fire on that Day (1 Cor.3.13), St Peter wrote of the earth and the works upon it being revealed in the time of fire (2 Pet.3.10). Jesus taught about the fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25.41). But these passages are rarely set in their original context. The Day of the LORD, the judgement on evil and the annihilation of the fallen angels - as the first Christians knew these ideas - were all parts of a temple myth about the purification and renewal of the earth, the destruction of those who had given wrong teaching, and the annual recreation of the earth at New Year. The fallen angels, as we shall see, were identified as wicked priests, and when Malachi described the coming judgement, the first to be refined in the fire would be the sons of Levi (Mal. 3.3).

How often is temple theology like this a part of Old Testament study? Old Testament study has traditionally centred on the history of Israel, 'salvation history' as it is sometimes called. Even when time is precious, people continue to agonise over the date and route of the Exodus, the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, complete with their dates, and the extent of the land that was promised. Things go a bit hazy following the exile. Then there is a tunnel after Malachi from which one emerges with relief into the bright light of Matthew, and the familiar world of the New Testament.

Questions have been asked about the creation stories in Genesis, and answered in various ways: 'Is Genesis true?' which for some means 'Is it historically accurate?' 'Did the snake really speak?' is another problem for some. More interesting is the question: 'Who created the snake?' because this immediately draws our attention to the fact that a great deal of the material presupposed by the biblical writers, the background to their writing so to speak, is not found in the Bible itself. Genesis 1-3 is profoundly true, but historicity is not a relevant question because it was not written as history. The biblical material must be treated with respect and allowed to speak for itself. It is the literature of a pre-philosophical culture, in which profound issues were debated by means of stories and vivid imagery such as talking snakes. Anyone who has seen pictures of the Lamb with seven eyes and seven horns in the Book of Revelation knows that taking things too literally helps nobody.

*There is black hole in the centre of biblical studies, into which the temple has disappeared. Few people study the temple apart from noting that it was there and what it looked like, and yet for a thousand years, the temple was the centre of religious life. If you consult a weighty reference book such as Emil Schürer's three volume work *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh 1979) you will find information on the duty rotas of the Levites, temple revenues, all sorts of practical details about the upkeep of services and the running of such a great enterprise, but nothing about the theology. There are historical reasons for this. Biblical scholarship has, until relatively recently, been the domain of Protestant scholars, who shied away from anything too priestly. Huge efforts have been made to root the Eucharist in synagogue practice, for example, when it quite clearly derived from the temple. 'We have a Great High Priest' (Hebrews 4.14) - and the high priest only functioned in the temple.*

So what is Temple Theology? *For our purposes today, it is the missing context for familiar Old Testament material, which, correctly located becomes the biblical theology of creation.*

The Temple was a model of the creation, and the liturgy of the temple preserved the creation. Genesis 1 was not an account of the historical process of creation, but a record of the great vision granted to Moses and others of how the world is made. In the six days when Moses was on Sinai, before the LORD called to him (Exod. 24.16), he saw the six days of creation, and was then told to replicate these when he built the tabernacle. A few ancient sources say that Moses saw the heavenly temple; but most assume that he saw the process of creation, and that the tabernacle represented this. Ancient material such as this is sometimes difficult to read, but the last section of Exodus 40, describing how Moses assembled the tabernacle, corresponds well to the days described in Genesis 1.

The holy of holies represented Day One, the state of the angels, although the angels do not appear in the biblical version of the creation story. They are, however, prominent in all the other accounts! The veil of the temple represented the second day, and the table with bread, wine and incense was the third day, when the plants were created. The seven branched lamp represented the lights of heaven created on the fourth day, the altar of sacrifice represented the non human creatures, and the High Priest was the human, male and female as the image of God [‘as the image’ not ‘in the image’!]. Adam - which simply means the human - Adam-male-and-female as the original High Priest is an important theme in temple theology. The Second Adam was the Great High Priest, and if we are the body of Christ, we all have this high priestly role.

You may have noticed that I did not say ‘the first day of creation’ but Day One’. This is what the Hebrew actually says, because Day One was outside time, and so outside any temporal sequence. It was also outside matter. A state outside time and matter has none of the markers by which we divide and define the things of the visible world. In other words, Day One is the state of unity concealed at the heart of the temple, concealed within the creation. It was known as ‘eternity’, which in Hebrew is the same as ‘the hidden place’. The Holy of Holies represented this state, concealed from most human eyes by the great veil of the temple which symbolised matter. It was woven from white, blue, red and purple thread, indicating the four elements of earth, air, fire and water from which the ancient world believed all things were made.

The Holy of Holies was the presence of God in the midst of creation, veiled from human eyes by matter. When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he passed outside time and matter, and was joined to the bodiless powers, the angels. ‘Creator of all things visible and invisible’ constantly reminds us of the temple imagery, as do the familiar lines:

*Change and decay in all around I see,  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.’*

When a person entered the Holy of Holies and so passed beyond the state of time and matter, he was able to see the whole of history spread before him. 3 Enoch - one of the many ancient texts that can illuminate the Bible - says that history was depicted on the reverse of the temple veil. It was from this state that the seers had their vision of the creation, and of all history past, present and future.

The Holy of Holies symbolised the Source and Centre of the Creation. ‘God in our midst’ was the original purpose of the holy place. Moses was told to erect the tabernacle so that the LORD could dwell [the Greek says ‘be seen’] in the midst (Exod. 25.8). Isaiah saw the LORD enthroned in the Holy of Holies, and heard the seraphim declare that his glory filled the whole earth (Isai. 6). Since the glory was deemed to be the heavenly host, Isaiah saw the whole of the temple, and the creation it represented, filled with angels who were the messengers and mediators between the invisible and the visible worlds. This was the vision of God, the vision of the unity at the heart of all creation, and of the glory of God suffused through the whole creation by the angels. The angels were messengers, and their role in the creation was to guide and to teach.

The temple priests thought of themselves as these angels, with the High Priest as the chief of the angels, the image of the LORD. The role of the priests, and especially of the High Priest, was to teach, and by right teaching to ensure the well being of the creation and the security of the

covenant which bound the creation into one. Just as the angels of Day One were a unity, so their teaching united and maintained the creation. Simeon, High Priest about 280 BCE was remembered for teaching: 'The world is sustained by three things: by the Law, by the temple liturgy, and by deeds of loving kindness' (m.Pirke Aboth 1.2).

The Creation itself was envisaged as a vast web, woven together and held in place by the bonds of the eternal covenant. This is another familiar word: *covenant*. The historical approach to the Old Testament lists four covenants: with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses and with David, and there is Jeremiah's prophecy of the new Covenant. *None of these, however, can have been the covenant renewed at the Last Supper, because none of them deals with the remission of sins.* This is another indication that we need to look below the surface, and certainly beyond the customary syllabus for Old Testament study, if we are to illuminate the New. Matthew, writing for a Jewish community, was the only evangelist who felt the need to define which covenant Jesus was renewing at the Last Supper, and his phrase 'for the remission of sins' immediately identifies it as the temple covenant, the covenant renewed by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

*The eternal covenant, also described as the covenant of peace or wholeness, underlies the biblical world view.* The creation was established and secured by the bonds of this covenant, and these bonds could be broken by human sin. If one or two bonds were broken, the system could cope with the breach, but if too many were broken, then the whole system collapsed. This was 'the wrath', the inevitable result of human sin, unless some priestly process intervened to protect the creation and human society. The bonds of the covenant embraced in one system heaven and earth, the visible and invisible creation, the natural world and human society. All were inter-related, and there was one Law for all. To cut off any one part brought disaster and the system collapsed. Isaiah, who had glimpsed the glory of the LORD filling the earth, described what happened when the eternal covenant collapsed. :

The earth mourns and withers  
The world languishes and withers,  
The heavens languish together with the earth.  
The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants;  
For they have transgressed the laws,  
Violated the statutes,  
Broken the everlasting covenant.  
Therefore a curse devours the earth  
And its inhabitants suffer for their guilt (Isai. 24.4-6).

There is a curiously contemporary feel to these words - Isaiah describing the collapse of the covenant of creation.

When the visible creation lost contact with the invisible creation, when it lost the vision of God, there was nothing to hold it together. The Book of Proverbs describes this situation. 'Where there is no prophetic vision, the people come apart' is a literal translation of Proverbs 29.18. When there is nobody standing in the presence of God, when there is nobody looking out from the holy of holies and seeing the creation as a whole - no prophetic vision - then human society unravels. The Hebrew verb here means to unplait hair. In our post enlightenment world, cutting ourselves free from the constraint of religion has been presented as a great liberation, the pursuit

of knowledge for its own sake, with no framework to determine how such knowledge should be used. In fact, the result has been not freedom but fragmentation at all levels. Satan has always been called the deceiver of the whole earth (Revelation 12.9), the one who deals in false knowledge.

When the Hebrew storytellers described this situation, they told a story about a talking snake, who offered human beings knowledge without the restraint imposed by an unreasonable God. 'Have your knowledge cut off from God' was the offer, and it was presented as a great enlightenment. 'Your eyes will be opened', said the snake, the great deceiver, 'and you will be like God.'

The question of the creation and creation theology is inseparable from knowledge about the creation and how it is used. *This is fundamental biblical theology and should form the basis of any Christian position on the environment.* In Genesis we have one episode of a longer story. The human pair are tempted with knowledge, and the result is a corrupted world of dust, thorns, thistles and mortality. The fuller version is preserved in many other sources as the story of the fallen angels. Led by Azazel, 200 angels rebelled against the great Holy One and came to earth. They made a counter covenant, and revealed their angelic knowledge to the people on earth, having first seduced human women. The serpent tempting Eve is one element in the larger picture. The knowledge that the fallen angels brought was used in rebellion against the great Holy One, outside his Law. As a result the earth was corrupted, and people suffered from the unrestricted use of the angel knowledge. Eventually their cries reached heaven, and the great archangels came to earth to destroy the rebel angels and cleanse the earth from the effects of their work. This was the fiery judgement. The archangels were told to heal the earth from the effects of the plague, and to restore righteousness, which did not mean simply social justice; it meant the right order of everything in the creation (1 Enoch 10), including fertility and plenty.

The work of the rebel angels was a counter covenant which destroyed the eternal covenant, and the work of restoration involved judging those who had destroyed the covenant bonds. Then the creation could be healed and restored, and the earth renewed. The great song of triumph in the Book of Revelation describes the early Christian hope: 'We give thanks to thee, LORD God Almighty... for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, ... and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.' (Rev. 11.17-18). *The fiery judgement is for those who destroy the earth.*

There are sayings of Jesus preserved outside the New Testament which show that the Kingdom was to be a place of fertility and plenty. When Irenaeus was expounding Romans 8, at the end of the second century CE, he quoted words of Jesus recorded by Papias, a disciple of St John. In the Kingdom, vineyards would have ten thousand shoots and each ear of wheat would yield huge amounts of flour. (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.33). This was the earth set free from bondage to decay, the rule of the fallen angels.

The knowledge which the fallen angels used to corrupt the earth was scientific knowledge, but used in a particular way. They taught about metalworking and how to make weapons, they taught about medicines and how to abort a foetus, they taught about jewellery and cosmetics and the arts of seduction. They abused women. They taught astrology. The traditional commentary on this material, preserved in the Ethiopic version of the *Book of Enoch*, says that the fallen

angels turned men into animals - but this is not what it seems. In temple tradition, angel beings were described as 'men' and human beings as 'animals' - familiar to us in the parable of the sheep and the goats. What the fallen angels did, when they turned men into animals, was turn angels into humans. This is the story in Genesis 3; Adam and Eve, created as the image of God, were condemned to mortality because they chose the knowledge of the fallen angels. *They chose to be creatures of dust.*

These stories were known to Isaiah. When he described the corrupted society of eighth century Judah, he condemned those who traded in weapons, filled the land with silver and gold, dealt with diviners and soothsayers, and worshipped the work of their own hands. He condemned the fashionable women of Jerusalem, with their jewels and painted eyes (Isai. 4.18-26). And when he was granted the vision of the holy of holies, his reaction was that he was a man of unclean lips. Isaiah saw the LORD, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. He heard voices of the seraphim: 'Holy Holy Holy is the LORD of Hosts, The whole earth is full of his glory.' This was a temple vision, depicting the Glory of the LORD in the creation, and Isaiah could see this only when he had first glimpsed the glory of the Lord at the centre. Isaiah's response was 'Woe is me for I kept silent' - not the usual translation which is: 'I am lost.' Most ancient versions read this Hebrew as 'I kept silent.' What had Isaiah failed to say about the land which had fallen under the sway of fallen angels?

The fallen angels were known as the sons of God. That is how they are described in Genesis 6, and the Book of Isaiah also begins with the sons of God: 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.' These were the fallen angels. And later, as we have seen, Isaiah described the broken covenant and the collapse of the creation. *It is this story that underlies Paul's teaching in Romans 8: 'All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God', and the creation waits for these new sons of God to set it free from the bondage to decay imposed by the fallen sons. Receiving the Spirit and becoming a son of God is inseparable from having a right knowledge about the creation.*

The priests, as we have seen, were the angels in the temple. Their role was to maintain the eternal covenant by their teaching, and then, if it was damaged by human sin, to renew it with their prayers and ritual. Malachi condemned the priests of his time for their false teaching. 'The lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the angel of the LORD of Hosts. But you have turned aside from the way, you have caused many to stumble by your teaching, you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of Hosts' (Mal. 2.7-8).

The covenant was broken even if the sin had been inadvertent (Lev. 5.17); this is why right teaching was so important. If the sinner repented of his action, atonement could be made and the stain of the sin removed. The bond could be repaired, and the sinner could be included again within the covenant. Anyone who deliberately committed a sin and was unrepentant, however, who 'sinned with a high hand', could not be forgiven (Num. 15.14-15).

The result of sin was 'iniquity', envisaged as a pollution which destroyed the covenant, and these pollutions defiled the temple. Only priests were allowed into the temple, so the effect of all human sin must have been 'registered', so to speak, in the temple rather than literally left there

by a polluted sinner. If the corruption of society became too great, the temple became impure and the LORD left. This is what Ezekiel described in his terrifying visions (Ezek.1 &10). The Glory of the LORD left the temple because it had become too polluted. The sin of that society had become so great that the priests could not - *or did not* - purify the temple. A fundamental of temple theology is that the temple was the pure place of God's presence in the midst of his people and in the midst of the creation, and the role of the priests was to keep the temple pure, a fit place for the LORD to dwell. The temple reflected the Glory of God out into the visible world. *It reflected the current state of society only insofar as it registered the sins which had to be cleansed and removed.*

The results of sin polluted the temple and threatened the eternal covenant which maintained the whole creation, visible and invisible, and reasons for sin were twofold: human conduct and bad teaching. In order to restore the covenant and protect the creation, the high priest had to remove the effects of sin by atonement - this is the temple meaning of the term - and the repentant sinner could then be restored within the covenant bond, which protected both him and the whole creation.

The greatest of the high priestly rituals were on the Day of Atonement, and we know from Hebrews 9 that this was the framework of the earliest Christian teaching about atonement. On the Day of Atonement, a whole complex of temple imagery came together. The high priest used blood, which represented life (Lev.17.11), to make atonement, which was described in Leviticus 16 as cleansing and consecrating. The polluted place had to be made holy again. Later texts give more detail of the ritual, but it is clear that the high priest sprinkled and smeared blood on various parts of the tabernacle or temple as an act of healing for the creation.

The blood he used represented the life of the LORD. This may surprise you, but we know from the third century Christian scholar Origen that the goat sent out into the wilderness represented Azazel, the leader of the fallen angels. Leviticus 16 describes the two goats used on the Day of Atonement, one sacrificed and the other banished into the desert carrying the sins. The crucial verse 8 is usually translated as 'two goats, one for the LORD and one for Azazel', but Origen, who had close contacts with the Jewish scholars of his time, says the Hebrew meant 'one goat *to represent* Azazel', not 'one goat for Azazel.' The other goat, then, must have *represented* the LORD, and its blood, which was taken into the holy of holies, must have symbolised the life of the LORD. Since the high priest also represented the LORD, we have here a temple ritual in which the high priest symbolically offered his own blood, his own life. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, as the LORD, renewed the creation with his own life, and took away all the results of sin which would otherwise have destroyed the eternal covenant. Hence the words at the Last Supper in Matthew's gospel: 'my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the putting away of sins' (Matt.26.28).

The movement of the ritual on the Day of Atonement was outwards from the holy of holies, so it was new life coming out from the presence of the LORD to heal and restore the creation. St Peter said this in his sermon in Solomon's Porch: 'Repent therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, and times of renewal may come from the presence of the LORD, and that he may send the Anointed one appointed for you, Jesus... (Acts 3.19-20). This is the temple understanding of atonement set at the heart of early Christian preaching: repentance indicates

the Day of Atonement context; blotting out of sin refers to the high priestly ritual; and times of renewal from the presence of the LORD is the restoration of the creation by the life from the holy of holies. The Great High Priest pours out himself to renew the earth, a theme taken up by St Paul in his letter to the Romans. 'Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind... (Rom 12.1-2). That theme of knowledge again - a renewed mind - here combined with self sacrifice.

Other texts show that the Day of Atonement was the Day of Judgement. Banishing Azazel was banishing all he represented - the Devil and his angels. Jesus said they would be sent to the fire when the Kingdom was established (Matt.25). Revelation described the ancient serpent- the great deceiver - bound in a pit before heaven and earth could be renewed. The obstacle to a restored creation was false knowledge.

Let us return now to the first appearance in the Bible of that ancient serpent - the talking snake in the Garden of Eden. There are several stories in the Old Testament which are similar to the myths of, for example, Mesopotamia, and the Hebrew storyteller was re-using the well known tale of the garden of the gods. Surprising as it may seem, these parallel versions are a help to the biblical scholar, because they enable us to see what was different about the Hebrew world view. In the story of the garden of Eden, there are two special trees, but in other accounts there is only one, so *we must concentrate on the two trees to discover what the story of the garden of Eden is really about.*

Adam was told he could eat from any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he was permitted to eat from the other named tree, the tree of life, which was the symbol of Wisdom. Its fruits, which were not forbidden, were life, peace, true wealth and happiness (Prov. 3.13-18). *Adam and Eve chose the wrong tree.* The talking snake offered them knowledge that could be used for good or evil - their choice - and so it made them like gods. The talking snake offered them pure knowledge, without the restrictions imposed by an interfering God. It was to be value free knowledge - but remember, the snake was the great deceiver. Not all the uses to which this knowledge was put would be evil - a subtle ploy. The good would be presented as the counterbalance to evil, and so the place of evil would be secure. Evil would be the price of freedom, and so forth. The snake was the great deceiver. Others who spoke of the relationship between knowledge and Wisdom said that when Wisdom was rejected on earth, she returned to heaven, and Iniquity took her place (1 Enoch 42). These storytellers knew there was no such thing as value-free knowledge, there was no middle way. The real choice was between the Creator and the snake, between Wisdom and Iniquity. It was choosing Iniquity, presented as liberation from the Creator, which caused the downfall of Adam and Eve.

Wisdom is a concept we have almost lost in the western Church. Wisdom appears in many places in the Old Testament, but usually written without a capital letter so that she is not too obvious. Wisdom, with a capital W, was with the Creator before the visible world was made. Proverbs 8 describes a female figure brought forth - the image is childbirth - before the visible creation was formed. She was beside the Creator when the foundations of the earth were set in place. She appears at the beginning of Genesis, the Spirit of God fluttering - a feminine form of the verb - fluttering over the face of the waters. In Proverbs 8 she is described as the 'master



workman' - but the Hebrew word here is uncertain. The Greek version understood it to mean 'the one who joins all together', or 'who holds all in harmony.' The Targums were Aramaic versions of the Scriptures used in Jesus' time, and the Targum to Genesis 1 describes the Spirit who hovered over the waters as Wisdom, a Spirit of love from before the LORD. Wisdom, then, was the One who joined things together and kept them in harmony, and she was love. The knowledge she gave was not knowledge which could be used for good or evil. What she gave was inseparable from love, and so there was no question of its being used for evil.

The complex of symbols and stories continues all through the Bible, and through the other ancient books which help restore biblical texts to their original temple context as the basis for an environment theology. The earliest Christians explained their faith and hope in terms of these Genesis stories, and how they were now being reversed after the advent of the second Adam. The human couple chose the wrong tree, and found out, too late, the real cost of their disobedience. They no longer had access to the tree of life, so they no longer had access to Wisdom who joined all things together in harmony and love. What they had chosen was freedom and mortality - and a fragmented world cut off from the presence of the Lord. They were driven from Eden, and later tradition said the way to the tree of life was barred by Uriel, the great archangel who illuminated the human mind. In the Book of Revelation, the faithful Christian was given access to the tree of life; the risen LORD's promise to the faithful in Ephesus, that they would be able to eat again from the tree of life (Rev. 2.7) was not just the promise of eternal life; it was the promise of a new way of knowing

The Hebrew storyteller described the world outside Eden as a place of thorns, thistles and dust, whereas Eden has been a place of water and fertility. Throughout the biblical narratives, water is a symbol of the presence of God and of right teaching, and so polluted water can be a powerful symbol when preaching about the environment. In Hebrew, 'rain' and 'teaching' are the same word. The rivers of Eden were symbols of Wisdom and the Spirit, and so a world without Wisdom was described as a desert without water. Isaiah described waters springing up in the desert as the glory of the Lord returned (Isai.35). Ezekiel described the river which flowed from the temple and transformed the desert (Ezek.37). *These were all symbols of Wisdom.* The *Book of Enoch*, no longer in our canon, was Scripture for the first Christians. It describes the time of the Messiah, when fountains of Wisdom would flow around the throne of God, and Wisdom would be poured out like water in the holy of holies, so that the thirsty could drink (1 En. 48 & 49). This is why Jesus stood in the temple on the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, when there was a water pouring ritual to pray for rain, and invited people to drink from him (John 7). The evangelist explained that this was the gift of the Spirit, the gift of Wisdom. This was Eden restored, and so St John saw the river of life flowing from the throne of God in the heavenly city (Rev.22).

We could also trace the symbolism of the anointing oil. The oil used to anoint the high priests and kings was perfumed oil from the tree of life, and so anointing made one wise. The Anointed One became a child of Wisdom, already resurrected - this is what was meant by Wisdom's gift of life - and was assured of true wealth, peace and insight. Wisdom opened the eyes and enabled the Anointed One to see. The high priest was anointed on his eyelids, just as the great deceiver had promised Eve in the garden of Eden that her eyes would be opened.

Do you remember that verse in Proverbs 29? Where there is no prophetic vision, the people come apart? This is what it means. Where there is nobody whose eyes have been opened to the vision, there is no one to teach about Wisdom who holds all things together. And the words of Isaiah? When the bonds of the eternal covenant are broken, the whole system collapses - because there is no Wisdom to hold it together. If knowledge about the world is fragmented, the world itself soon becomes fragmented. Wisdom, on the other hand, is the way of knowing the world in love that holds all things together.

The oil of the tree of life was the sacrament of Wisdom. Isaiah described such an anointing, and the words are very familiar.

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and might,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (Isai.11.2).

The gifts of the Spirit transform the mind, they make humans think differently and know differently. Anointed eyes see the same as others, but they see differently. Anointed ears hear the same things, but hear differently. And anointed lips speak differently. This is what Isaiah realised when he was granted the vision of the LORD at the heart of the creation, and the glory filling the earth. He was a man of unclean lips because he had kept silent.

The fragrance of the oil was like sweet myrrh, and in temple tradition, myrrh oil was the sacrament of resurrection. [Some early Christians said that the myrrh brought to the Christ Child was this oil of resurrection, and not a prophecy of his death.] This special fragrance identified those who had Wisdom. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. The passages continues: 'His *fragrance* shall be the fear of the LORD' (Isai.11.3). It is usually translated: 'His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD' but the Hebrew word here is fragrance. This explains St Paul's words to the Corinthians: 'Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere' (2 Cor. 2.14). We are the fragrance of Christ. In other words, we carry the perfume of the Anointed One. 'A fragrance from life for life' is St Paul's allusion to the tree of life. In the time of the anointed one, said Isaiah, there would be no hurt or destruction, because the earth would be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isai. 11.9).

Adam had been the original anointed high priest in the temple of creation. He had been set in the garden to *till it and keep it* (Gen 2.15), and the tree of life had been intended as his food. 'Till it and keep it' are temple words. 'Till' translates the word used for temple liturgy, and 'keep' means 'guard' in the sense of preserving. Adam the high priest was set to serve and preserve the creation. Anyone pondering the story of Adam as the original high priest would have thought of him entering the holy of holies and standing in the presence of God. In the time of Jesus, people believed that Adam been shown the vision before he sinned (2 Bar.4.3). In the time of Jesus, people believed that Adam had been given the seeds of incense shrubs when he left the garden, so that temple perfumes would remind him of what he had lost (Apocalypse of .Moses 29). As the high priest, Adam would have cleansed and reconsecrated the temple each year, in an act which symbolised his own self sacrifice to heal the creation.

And we must never forget that the act, above all others, which set in motion the events of Holy Week was Jesus cleansing the temple. The temple authorities had lost sight of the true meaning of the temple, and had allowed it to become corrupt. They had Jesus arrested. Bearing in mind the cosmic significance of the temple which I have been outlining to you, and the building itself as a model of the whole creation, listen again to St Mark's description of Jesus cleansing the temple.

Jesus taught and said to them, "Is it not written, '*My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations*'? *But you have made it a den of robbers.*" And the chief priests and scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching. (Mark 11.17-18)