

“Faith of a Naturalist”

John Burroughs

Amid the decay of creeds, love of nature has high religious value. . . . It has made them contented and at home wherever they are in nature—in the house not made with hands. This house is their church, and the rocks and the hills are the altars, and the creed is written in the leaves of the trees and in the flowers of the field and in the sands of the shore. A new creed every day and new preachers, and holy days all the week through. Every walk to the woods is a religious rite, every bath in the stream is a saving ordinance. Communion service is at all hours, and the bread and wine are from the heart and marrow of Mother Earth. There are no heretics in Nature’s church; all are believers, all are communicants. The beauty of natural religion is that you have it all the time; you do not have to seek it afar off in myths and legends. . . . It is of today; it is now and here; it is everywhere. The crickets chirp it, the birds sing it, the breezes chant it, the thunder proclaims it, the streams murmur it. . . . Its incense rises from the plowed fields, it is on the morning breeze, it is in the forest breath and in the spray of the wave. The frosts write it in exquisite characters, the dews impearl it, and the rainbow paints it on the cloud. . . . It is not even a faith; it is a love, an enthusiasm, a consecration to natural truth.

Accepting the Universe (1920)