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CHARLOTTE CAMPUS

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Introduction

Finally, I sit down. The night is quiet, and four of my daughters are sound asleep. What a day this has been! This was to be the day to finish and mail *Faith and Practice*. All that was left was my introduction. I went to bed last night with writer's block; after reading and editing and working with the authors of all these seven great articles on environmental stewardship, what more could be said? Well, I decided to sleep on it, and just trust that things would all come together in the morning.

I awoke to my wife in labor. Off Susan and I went to the hospital, and before long Madeline Rose Gillespie entered into the brightness and noise of this world. What an eventful day! It's late now. I just called the hospital, and all is well there. Susan is resting, Madeline is asleep.

My thoughts turn to the world Madeline has entered. There are those who fear bringing children into this violent and broken world. It is a risky proposition for sure, and has been since Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. In truth, I can't know that all will be well for Madeline. I can't know that she will escape heartbreak. I can't know that I will escape heartbreak. Yes, there is the ragged edge, and sometimes we or our loved ones fall off of it. Life is not without risk. Terror does lurk in this fallen world.

Yet, I like kids. I've always thought that children and animals account for most of the happiness that comes to us in this life. And of course, I love my girls. They are a precious gift. But life is too risky to have kids just for my own pleasure. And to have them just to make me happy (perhaps the number one mistake of Baby Boomer parents), would be, well, rather selfish and ungodly, and wouldn't make for very healthy kids. So why have children at all? Isn't the world crowded enough? Haven't we already filled the earth and subdued it? Aren't there enough environmental problems already, due to there being so many people in the world?

Well, yes and no. I believe that God wants to make His world better through my kids (and yours). The world, as a matter of fact, needs *more* people who will heed the call to be His vice-regents in caring for His good earth, who will give of themselves to serve others and make

this a better place to live, who will be His agents in this world. And He has called my wife and me to teach our children how to exercise loving dominion, how to care for His creation, how to love Him by loving His creatures, and how to love their neighbors, through, among other things, beautifying their world and sending clean water and clean air their way. And so my wife and I, in very practical day-to-day ways, are to model creation care. How else will these five girls learn how to be God's stewards in His world?

But still, I confess, I worry a little for Madeline. What will her world be like? What will my generation bequeath to her? Will she drink clear and clean water without fear of dangerous trace elements and poisons. Will she be able to float down crystal streams and see herons and egrets and dragonflies and eagles? Will there still be trees so big around they stop you in your tracks, and so high they strain your neck to see the top? Will there still be Siberian tigers and African elephants in her world? Will there be spotted owls and California condors? Will there still be grizzlies and 'gators? Will she have the joy of just knowing that they're there, even if she never gets to see one in the wild?

Will Madeline be inspired to sing a hymn to the praise of God for His beautiful world, or will ugliness and sameness and human "stuff" be scattered everywhere, killing her spirit, making her smaller? Will her world fill her with wonder? Will it enlarge her vision of God and His greatness? Will there still be wild places close enough to run to when life closes in and the pace gets too hectic? Will she breathe air that is crisp and clean and look up at night through those crisp clean skies to billions and billions of stars? I hope so—for her sake, for her neighbor's sake, and for God's sake.

The articles in this issue of *Faith and Practice* have already inspired me to be a better parent and a better steward of God's creation. They have helped me to understand what is driving the present day environmental movement, and how it is that the Christian world view really does provide the best perspective for getting our environmental act together. Enjoy your reading.

Joel Gillespie,
Managing Editor

Will Madeline be inspired to sing a hymn to the praise of God for His beautiful world, or will ugliness and sameness and human "stuff" be scattered everywhere, killing her spirit, making her smaller?

From Fear to Love

Gary L. Jones

Many people have a strong opinion with regard to environmental issues. Some warn about the eventual depletion of earth's resources; others foresee the discovery of new resources for an increasingly productive humanity.¹ Some are fearful about the future of the planet earth; others are scornful about the purported urgency of any present or future environmental crisis. Statistics are quoted by both sides in their arguments for or against environmental concerns.

Rather than quoting statistics, this essay will present a biblical case for environmental stewardship. Webster's Dictionary defines "environment" as "all the conditions, circumstances, and influences surrounding, and affecting the development of, an organism or group of organisms." A steward is defined as "one who acts as supervisor or administrator, as of finances and property, for another or others." Jonathan Edwards explained stewardship in this way:

He that has a treasure committed to him by the owner, and takes the care and charge of it, not as his own possession, but only to improve or keep for an appointed time...must return that treasure to the owner when his time is out, and is accountable to him how he has fulfilled that which he undertook.²

A Christian steward is one who manages the resources of God in a way that honors God, and whose obedience to God extends to every manner of activity and life.³ Environmental stewardship, then, is the careful maintenance and preservation of those "conditions, circumstances, and influences" which together make up God's created order. To discover the contours of biblical environmental stewardship, we must turn to Scripture—the only perfect rule of faith and practice.

But as we turn to Scripture we are struck with an obvious fact: the commandment, "Thou shalt not ruin the environment," is nowhere to be found, and yet the concept of environmental

stewardship is inescapable. This is as it is with some other doctrinal issues as well. Although the word "trinity" is not found in the New Testament, the books of the New Testament are explicit in their presentation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the word "theocracy" is not found in the Old Testament, the books of the Old Testament clearly announce God's intention that ancient Israel's Church and State be unified together as a theocracy in allegiance to Him. Although the term "racial prejudice" is not found in Scripture, it is obvious from the reading of Acts 2:5-11, 8:26-39, and Revelation 7:9 that racial prejudice is inappropriate for the Christian.

The biblical case for environmental stewardship will not be based on a particular creation-care commandment or proof text. Rather the principles of environmental stewardship will be derived from those most general and central of all commandments which bear upon human beings—the "cultural mandate" and the "two greatest commandments."

CREATION, FALL, AND CONTINUED OBLIGATION

The biblical warrant for creation care is found in Genesis 1:26-30, a passage known in Reformed theology as the "cultural mandate:"

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the

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whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Man, created in the image of God, was given a mandate to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. Humanity was commanded by God to fill the earth and gain control over the other creatures of the earth. Moreover, as Genesis 2:15 informs us “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Adam was to take care of creation, not abuse it.

Genesis 3 contains the horrendous chronicle of the Fall. In verse 17, we read of God’s words of judgment to Adam, and through Adam to all humanity: “Cursed is the ground because of you.” All of creation now suffers as the result of Adam’s fall into disobedience. Indeed, all of our environmental problems can be traced back to the Fall, and these problems will be ongoing until the Fall is finally and completely reversed. Romans 8:22 states that creation has been “groaning” right up to the present time.

Not only has the ground been directly cursed by God. The sinful nature of human beings also results in specific sins directed against creation. Indeed, fallen humanity has continued to relate in a fallen manner to the rest of creation. Human beings have spurted huge amounts of gaseous poisons into the atmosphere. They have turned once beautiful bodies of water into cesspools. They have tortured, maimed, and killed the creatures of the earth. This is nothing to be proud of. Tony Campolo is convinced that the human race has abused its privilege:

How many chimpanzees and monkeys have been tortured and abused, not for a high and lofty purpose like seeking a cure for cancer or AIDS, but to provide insensitive scientists with the opportunity to carry out unnecessary experiments or to test some frivolous product? How many small animals have been jabbed with needles and subjected to slow and painful deaths, not in an effort to find a cure for

something like Lyme’s disease, but to find out which product makes for curlier hair? The record is clear. We are making animals endure incredible pain without sufficient justification. I cannot believe Jesus is pleased with this. Animals should be used for necessary medical experiments but never for the development of beauty aids and toiletries. And when animal testing is warranted, every effort should be made to minimize the pain these animals have to endure.⁴

The cultural mandate was never intended to be an excuse for cruel behavior or exploitation of creation and its creatures. We see in Scripture a presentation both of human rights and responsibilities. God, in his mercy to fallen man in a fallen and hostile world has granted to people the right to eat meat (Gen. 9:3), a privilege which remains allowable for the New Covenant people of God (Rom. 14:1-9). Such an allowance, however, is quite different from a demand to annihilate all animal life or mistreat animals. In fact, as Proverbs 12:10 states, “A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.”

HONORING BOTH SIDES

Biblical environmental stewardship acknowledges both the importance of creation and the value of human beings created in the image of God. It is difficult to find political platforms which honor both sides of the cultural mandate. One political position emphasizes the priority of environmental action while tacitly endorsing the killing of unborn human beings. Another political position views creation as the exclusive property of the human race, to be used at its whim and leisure. Neither position is especially biblical. The biblical position involves taking care of what God has created as well as recognizing the unique importance of the human race.

Thus there remains for human beings the obligation to care for creation. This obligation is put forth in the Psalms. Yes, it is true that “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psa. 24:1) and that “God is King of all the earth” (Psa. 47:7). But it is also true that God has made man “ruler over the works of his hands,” having

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"put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas (Psa. 8:6-8). May we who have been placed as rulers over the created order never forget that "the Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made" (Psa. 145:9). As Jonah 4:11 tells us, the Lord has compassion even for the cattle of Nineveh.

God cares about what happens to His creation. Therefore, Christians are to exercise dominion rightly by honoring what God has created and by striving to improve what has become fallen. Francis Schaeffer, echoing the mindset of Jonathan Edwards, put it this way:

Man has dominion over the "lower" orders of creation, but he is not sovereign over them. Only God is the Sovereign Lord, and the lower orders are to be used with this truth in mind. Man is not using his own possessions....[Nature] is not ours. It belongs to God, and we are to exercise our dominion over these things not as though entitled to exploit them, but as things borrowed or held in trust. We are to use them realizing that they are not ours intrinsically. Man's dominion is under God's dominion.⁵

THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

Scripture contains numerous commands; yet all are grounded in the two "greatest commandments," singled out by Jesus in discussion with the Pharisees:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:34-40).

Jesus, quoting from two separate portions of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, indicates that the two greatest commandments are commandments to love, and that on these two commandments hang all the others.

LOVING GOD

The commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" is found in Deuteronomy 6:5. A few verses later, we encounter phrases such as: "Serve God only" and "Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you." It is imperative for the people of God to understand and to claim that there is but one true Triune God. He alone is to be worshipped and served with all that we are and all that we have. Worshipping another being—or worshipping nature itself—is unacceptable. Nature is not God.

Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, O Lord our God. Therefore, our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this" (Jer. 14:22; see also Amos 4:13).

Sadly, many people who are enthusiastic about preserving and protecting the environment have rejected the one true God. They prefer to think of themselves as gods and of this planet as Mother Earth. Consider the following quote from a New Age publication:

Clearly, a need from within calls for our attention at this moment in evolutionary time. The call is to serve the well-being of the living planet Earth, Gaia....The call is to enter into a holistic consciousness from which all peoples, all forms of life, all manner of universal manifestation are seen as interdependent aspects of one truth.⁶

How tempting it is for the Christian to disregard environmental concerns merely on the basis of those who are arrayed in support of them—Greenpeace, Ted Turner, Carl Sagan, Hollywood, and EarthFirst!, to name a few. Granted, many environmentalists are steeped in secular

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We love the God who transcends nature and humanity. Loving this God is the reason for taking care of what He has created.

humanism or New Age thought. Nevertheless, if a certain environmental practice honors God, then a Christian is to undertake that practice regardless of whoever else may likewise practicing it. As a Christian, I am not automatically entitled to oppose recycling simply because some New Age Hollywood diva actively promotes it.

In contrast to the New Age devotee, the Christian communicates loving duty to the God of Scripture as the number one reason for creation care. We love the God who *transcends* nature and humanity. Loving this God is the reason for taking care of what He has created. As Christians, we strive to maintain and improve the environment, not because we are quivering with fear about the future, not because we worship Mother Earth, not because we cower before the vocal and extremist environmentalists, but because we love God and are growing in our loving relationship with Him.

As the first *Westminster Catechism* answer points out, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Christians glorify God by being properly related to Him through Jesus Christ. Christians also glorify God by taking the cultural mandate seriously. When human beings deliberately squander or contaminate natural resources, they dishonor God. Is there any way we can construe polluting the air or littering the earth as glorifying God?

On a more positive note, the Heavenly Father uses His people to bring blessing to the created order. As the apostle Paul writes, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). Bear in mind that this statement follows a discourse on the incredible grace of God shown to the fallen sinner in Christ. No amount of good works can ever save a fallen person. However, those who have been graciously saved by God have been remade to follow a new course of life full of good works, works He Himself has prepared for us, that we would walk in them. Through good works of creation care we can show our love to God who made us and who is remaking us as His workmanship. Certainly can look at positive environmental projects as opportunities for showing our love to God and walking in newness of life in His world.

For example, the Evangelical Environmen-

tal Network (EEN) is an organization dedicated to creation care as an outworking of obedience to God. EEN distributes "Caring for Creation" kits to churches, and has worked hard in support of the Endangered Species Act. EEN Director Stan LeQuire sums up the organization's purpose:

Our emphasis is biblical. The Bible has a lot to say about how we should be living with regard to the creation. All the warnings from scientists could be proven wrong tomorrow, and we would go right on doing what we're doing.⁷

LOVING NEIGHBOR

Loving our neighbors—even our difficult and unpleasant neighbors—is the second reason for exercising biblical stewardship toward the environment. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), Jesus deals with the question of who is one's neighbor. This parable depicts a Samaritan who tended to the needs of his Jewish enemy. The message is obvious: The person who needs me and whose well being depends upon me, even if that person hates me and is my enemy, is viewed by Jesus as being my neighbor, a neighbor I am to love. Likewise, when Jesus told the expert in the law, "Love your neighbor as yourself," He was quoting a portion of Leviticus 19:18. The first portion of Leviticus 19:18 reads as follows: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people." Elsewhere Jesus would say, "Love your enemy, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

We Christians are to love our fellow human beings because they have been created in the image of God; the human race is a special and unique part of creation.⁸ Neglecting the environment is unacceptable because so many human beings, human beings created in the image of God, are adversely affected.

Stuart Briscoe once wrote of a night when he was driving in the pouring rain. He was almost run off the road by a car which passed him at a place where there was no room to pass. Through his rain-covered windshield, Briscoe was just able to decipher the car's bumper sticker: "See you in church on Sunday."⁹ Needless to say, the careless driver's reputation as a

churchgoer was tarnished by his willful course of action that particular night. Carelessness affects other people; negligence can damage the lives of other people. Whether the damage is rapid or gradual is beside the point. Love of neighbor seeks to honor, protect, and preserve the life of our neighbor. Love of neighbor seeks to prevent harm from occurring to our neighbor. When we bring harm and imbalance into an environmental system we bring harm to whatever and whomever is affected by that system. When we pollute the land, air, or water, we harm our neighbor who must eat food from the land, breathe the air, and drink the water.

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Take time to read the parable of the Sheep and the Goats as it is found in Matthew 25:31-46. Observe carefully what this parable says and implies. If it is Scriptural to feed the hungry, then it is certainly Scriptural to engage in programs and activities which conserve food resources and safeguard food purity. If it is Scriptural to look after the sick, then it is certainly Scriptural to provide pure water and clean air so as to prevent sickness. The careful maintenance and preservation of the "conditions, circumstances and influences" which make up the environment of our neighbors is not only a constructive idea, it is also an example of our loving devotion to those who are created in the image of God.

The attitude of loving one's neighbor results in specific actions and behaviors which benefit the neighbor. Carl Whirley, a missionary to Africa, was asked by natives shortly after his arrival:

Why do they send you missionaries to build schools and hospitals? They haven't seen us. They do not know us. We are told thousands of women forego things they want at Christmas time in order to give sacrificially to get the Gospel to us. Why do they give?" Carl answered, "They haven't seen you, but they have seen Christ, and He gave all for you, so they have followed His example."¹⁰

Giving up Christmas goodies in order to build

schools and hospitals for people across the globe? What a contrast this is to the privatized, individualistic, personal-needs-oriented version of Christianity running rampant in America today! In contrast to this mindset, true Christianity demonstrates itself in a life of practical self-giving:

This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:10-11).

Moreover, genuine other-focused Christian love is to be practiced by all believers, clergy and laity. The ARP Standards expresses this other-oriented life of service this way, "All the church's people in every phase of their living are to be God's ministers to the world by being servants of His Son, the King of the Church."¹¹ Therefore, a pledge to care for creation out of love for my neighbor requires more than a shallow "what's in it for me?" approach. As Christians, we may have to forego certain advantages for ourselves so that another can be blessed, so that our neighbor's life can be upheld. We may need to make some sacrifices, even substantial sacrifices. Perhaps loving one's neighbor in the environmental context will lead to a few higher priced commodities. Are we willing to insist that companies pledge the health and safety of their workers, even if such a pledge results in a greater cost of their product to us? Are we willing to pay for cleaner air through higher utility rates? Are we willing to pay higher prices for foods grown without dangerous pesticides and insecticides? Are we willing to leave prime real estate undeveloped in order to protect crucial watersheds? Are we willing simply to have less stuff in order to preserve earth's precious resources? In order to love our neighbors, the Christian answer must be an uncompromising "Yes!"¹²

Christians can hold differing views about various aspects and details of environmental stewardship. Should one use more paper plates and less detergent, or fewer paper plates and more detergent? Should one use disposable diapers and less hot water or cloth diapers and more hot water? What kinds of substitutes are there for the chemicals we use? How far should we

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and drink the water.***

limit our intake of meat? When exactly is recycling warranted and when is it not? Questions like these do not all have obvious answers. By the grace of God, Christians who are teachable servants will, in time, arrive at solid answers to many of these questions. In the mean time, Christians who are enthusiastic about preserving and conserving resources and contributing to the welfare of others through the proper care of creation represent a positive step toward loving God and neighbor

BIBLICAL GUIDELINES

I have drawn from various Scriptures several principles to keep in mind as we consider our part in creation care. I hope these biblical guidelines prove helpful.

First, for the believer in Christ, environmental stewardship is about care and about love, not about fear. Although human beings have in fact damaged portions of the earth's ecological systems, the entire earth will not be "killed" by humanity before Christ's Second Coming. No matter which millennial position one takes, 2 Peter 3:10-13 forecasts that God will purge and then "save" the earth. Moreover, God is Sovereign and no human blunder or scheme can frustrate His purposes (see Prov. 21:30; Job 42:1-2). Romans 8:21 points out the earth will be delivered from its present groanings. Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1 point to an eventual new heavens and new earth. The Christian hope in this new heaven and new earth, rather than being something that leads to complacency, should spark the people of God to serve Him through various environmental projects with confident joy.

Second, let us remember that certain approaches taken *against* those who have environmental concerns can themselves involve tactics of fear and intimidation. When Paul cited the love command to the churches of Galatia, he immediately added the warning, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Gal. 5:15). Certain Christians produce anxiety among other environmentally-conscious Christians by branding them as liberal, fanatical, New Age eco-freaks, etc. Such labeling is unprofitable for the Body of Christ. On the other hand, loving one

another is immensely profitable for the Body of Christ: Genuine Christian love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor. 13:7).

Third, according to Scripture, human beings are of greater value than animals. Jesus stated that His followers were worth more than many sparrows (Matt. 10:31, Luke 12:7). He also declared "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep" (Matt. 12:12). Human beings have been created in the image of God; animals, on the other hand, while created by God, have not been created in His image, they do not bear his likeness. In ancient Israel, bulls were to be put to death for killing people (Exo. 21:28-32), not people for killing bulls.

Fourth, having concern for creation should never replace or supplant the need to share the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. As Jesus said: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Peter, speaking before the Sanhedrin, boldly proclaimed that salvation could only be found in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). The curse upon the earth will not be finally reversed, nor will the people of the earth be saved from sin and guilt through good environmental stewardship. No amount of environmental legislation will ever usher in a new heaven and new earth, nor purchase a heavenly habitat for a fallen humanity.

Fifth, the Christian is to bathe every environmental concern and action in fervent prayer. Prayer can be immensely helpful to fellow believers experiencing hardships in other parts of the world (See 2 Cor. 1:9-11). Within the sovereign plan of an all-wise God, prayer can make a difference (James 5:16-18). Because we realize our God is compassionate, we are to pray with perseverance and assurance (Luke 18:1-8). Prayer makes us aware of the purpose of God in specific situations, including environmental ones. If God's people truly trust Him, He will direct them in the way they should go (Ps. 32:8-10).

Sixth, everything done by the Christian is to be done out of thanksgiving to God through Christ (Col. 3:17). Redeemed human beings have purpose in living life as a perpetual thank offering to God. Giving glory to God is the primary motivation for creation care. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Ps. 115:1).

No amount of environmental legislation will ever usher in a new heaven and new earth, nor purchase a heavenly habitat for a fallen humanity.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ken Sidey, "Will We Reap What We Sow," *World Vision*, April/May, 1996, p. 4.

² John Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1* (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 1991) pp. 462-463.

³ ARP Board of Stewardship, *A Concise Statement on Biblical Stewardship*, 1996. Though not officially adopted by Synod as of this writing, this document details the scope of stewardship as it applies to every aspect of life and devotion. It represents a logical expansion of the questions asked of applicants for ARP Church membership, especially question # 6: "Do you promise, with the Lord's help, to be faithful in your Christian duties, both in private life and in the work of the Church?"

⁴ Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992) pp. 72-73. Those from a Reformed perspective will disagree with some of Campolo's theological reasoning; however, his argument on p. 159 is difficult to disagree with: "We do not need 'puppy mills.' Animal shelters and communities from one end of the country to the other are bursting with unwanted animals. Anybody who wants a dog can go and rescue one of them from death. In spite of that fact, over three hundred thousand puppies are bred in puppy mill kennels where 'farmers' turn them out for sale at pet stores. In these kennels, female dogs are bred continuously, with no rest between cycles. And when their bodies wear out, they are killed."

⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, from *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, Vol. 5 C (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982) p. 41.

⁶ David Spangler, from the foreword of Barry Waters' *Conscious Evolution* (Los Angeles: New Age Press, 1981,) p. xii.

⁷ Randy Frame, "Greening of the Gospel?" *Christianity Today*, Nov. 11, 1996, p. 86.

⁸ Sooner or later, the Christian has to deal with the concept of "theistic evolution," the viewpoint that God has been working through the process of evolution to gradually—and finally—create what is known as a human being. In my opinion, theistic evolution is a philosophi-

cal marriage destined to fail. How exactly can a "survival" mentality be wedded to a "love your neighbor" ethic? How can a worldview glorifying conflict and struggle ever be compatible with a worldview of compassion, service, and submission to a Holy God? The premise of evolution and the ethical demands of a holy God seem philosophically unreconcilable.

⁹ Stuart Briscoe, *What Works When Life Doesn't* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1976) p. 55.

¹⁰ *The Zondervan 1992 Pastor's Annual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) p. 271.

¹¹ *The Form of Government of the ARP Church*, I.C.2., p. 171

¹² Millard Erickson, *The Evangelical Mind and Heart* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 77. Erickson goes on to say: "A keen sense of unity with others will transform our attitudes toward material things and their use....In the material realm, what I give to others seems to reduce what I have myself. Thus, if I have a hundred dollars and give fifty dollars to someone else, I only have fifty dollars left. If, however, I perform an act of kindness, I do not decrease what I am or have, but increase it. An act of assistance brings me happiness in giving happiness to others....Part of what Christ saves us from is selfishness, with its insatiable desires for self-satisfaction. In addition, we are delivered from conformity, the need to keep up with the Joneses. Much of the consumption that is contributing to the ecological problems we face stems from the desire for something simply because others have it. A full-orbed grasp of the depth and scope of salvation will help to make us part of the solution rather than part of the problem."

**How can a
worldview
glorifying
conflict and
struggle ever
be compatible
with a
worldview of
compassion,
service, and
submission to
a Holy God?**

Why We Bother

Mark E. Ross

The fact that one day these houses will be destroyed is surely not a reason for neglecting their upkeep in the meantime.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

This picture of the end of all things raises many questions concerning the future of the earth. It also raises many questions regarding why we as human beings should even bother caring for the earth if in the end it is going to be burned up. These questions are important in any discussion of the Christian's responsibility toward the environment. They deserve good answers.

THE PREACHER HAS AN ANSWER

As a start let's consider the question which opens the book of Ecclesiastes: "What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?" (Eccl. 1:3). The Preacher of Ecclesiastes asks this question because so much of our experience *under the sun* suggests that there is no profit at all in all of our labors—it is all vanity, pointless, meaningless. One of the reasons things seem to be this way is that the effects of our labor are only temporary; things just don't last in this fallen world. Either we perish, or what we do perishes, or what we do is simply forgotten altogether. Well if this is so, why do we bother? What is the profit one has for all that he does under the sun?

As you may recall, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes (in his better moments) does not himself agree with the conclusion that it doesn't

matter what we do or how we live under the sun. True, it may be the case that what we do does not last in this fallen world. Yet, while we are alive, while we are here, there is nothing better than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime, to eat and drink and find satisfaction in one's toil. In fact, being able to do this is a gift from God (Eccl. 3:12f.). Even if our life doesn't last forever, it is God's gift to us while it lasts, and it is worth enjoying while we can.

Surely at least as much can be said for taking care of the earth. Even if the earth does not last forever, its bounty is worth enjoying while it does last. How else can we rejoice and do good in our lifetime? How else can we eat and drink and find satisfaction in our toil under this earth's sun, unless there is an earth under the sun worth enjoying?

EVEN THE TEMPORARY MIGHT BE ESSENTIAL

Not only does the bounty of the earth provide us with enjoyment while we live out this life on the earth, we need the earth and its bounty to be able to live at all. We are dependent upon it for our life. Since we do not know when the Lord will return, and since we and those who come after us will continue to have need of the earth and its bounty until then, it makes sense that we would take care of it as best we can.

Think about the houses we live in. The fact that one day these houses will be destroyed is surely not a reason for neglecting their upkeep in the meantime. Though one day we shall have no need of these houses, we do have need of them today, and for all we know shall have need of them for some time to come. Our children might also need our houses, or the equity which they can derive from them. Others who come after us may have need of houses in which to live. Who knows who will live in our houses after us? So for many reasons we should take care of our houses while we have them.

A PARTIAL ANSWER

So it seems we already have at least a partial answer to our initial question. Even if ultimately there is no profit from one's labor here on the earth, and even if all things will be burned up in the end, what we have here is still worth enjoying while we have it, and worth preserving for those who will come after us. The fact that we are dependent upon our earthly environment for our survival, as well as for our comfort and enjoyment, makes it imperative that we look after it and take care of it. And not only do we need the earth now, but we and others after us might also need it for quite some time to come.

GOD'S PURPOSES ARE STILL AT WORK

There are yet other and more important reasons for caring for the earth even if one day it is to be burned. We must consider not only the good we derive from the earth, but the ongoing purposes that God has for His creation. As God's image-bearers in the world, we are called to labor with Him in carrying out His many purposes.

For example, God cares for His creatures through the bounty of His creation. He upholds our lives and the lives of others in the world through the things which He has made. He gives us water to drink which quenches our thirst and sustains our life. From the plants which grow and the animals which live on the earth He gives us food to eat which nourishes our bodies.

God's purposes in creation are not just to sustain our lives, but to enrich them. He has provided for us things of beauty, things which taste good, and things which smell good. He has given us all good things richly to enjoy (cf. Acts 14:17 and 1 Tim. 6:17). Preserving these things for ourselves and others to enjoy is working with God.

God also reveals Himself through the things which He has made. His invisible attributes, His eternal power and deity, are clearly seen, being understood through what He has created (Rom. 1:20). By working to preserve the beauty and order of the earth, we help the earth to bear witness to its invisible Creator.

Thus, even if one day this earth is to be destroyed, God has a purpose for it today, and perhaps for many days yet to come. It is not our right to determine when there is no more need for the earth. That is God's prerogative. Until then, we must labor in obedience to God to care for that which He has entrusted to us. Therefore, as long as God has any continuing purpose for the world He has made, we have a duty to care for it in such a way that we can pass it along, with all its goodness and beauty, to our descendants.

So, as we consider how our own well-being and the well-being of others is tied to the well-being of the earth, and as we consider the ongoing purposes God has for His creation, we can see that even if one day the world is to be destroyed, there are many reasons for taking good care of it while it lasts.

A BIBLICAL TENSION

But is it actually true that one day the earth will be altogether destroyed and annihilated, replaced by something completely different? We have assumed from our initial reading of the passage in 2 Peter 3 that this is true, but is it really? Is this in fact what the Bible teaches concerning the end of this age and the coming of the eternal kingdom?

The language from 2 Peter 3 quoted at the beginning of this article certainly *seems* to suggest that one day the earth will be destroyed. Other passages of Scripture do the same (cf. Isa. 34:4; Matt. 5:18, 24:35; Rev. 20:11, 21:1). Even so, there are other passages of Scripture which describe the end of this age and the coming of the next in a different way, with language of renewal and restoration, rather than annihilation and replacement. Romans 8:19-23 is the most important of these:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning

But is it actually true that one day the earth will be altogether destroyed and annihilated, replaced by something completely different?

as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Here the image is not the destruction of the earth, such that something entirely new and different must be put in its place. Rather, the image is that of the renewal of the earth, a release from bondage, a new birth and regeneration. Paul personifies the creation and describes it as anxiously waiting for release. It now groans and suffers. It has been subjected to futility, not by its own choice, but that of another. Under this curse of futility it anxiously waits, in hope that when the sons of God are revealed, it too will be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. This is not the language of annihilation and replacement, but of regeneration and renewal.

Other passages also speak in the language of Romans 8. Matthew 19:28 speaks of the new age as a *regeneration*, as a coming to life again. Acts 3:21 speaks of a *restoration* of all things, as if returning them to their original condition. Colossians 1:19f. speaks of the *reconciliation* of all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth. The atonement of Christ affects not just fallen humanity, bringing salvation to the elect, but the fallen cosmos as well, bringing renewal to the earth which was cursed.

Thus there is a tension between the two ways in which the Bible speaks of the world which is to come. How then are we to think about the future world? Will it be an entirely new and different one, this present world having been annihilated? Or will it somehow be this same earth and universe, released from its bondage to decay, but totally renewed and purified?

WHAT REFORMED THEOLOGY HAS SAID

While supporters on either side of the debate can be found in the history of Christian thought, Reformed theologians¹ have generally favored the position that the earth is to be renewed rather than annihilated. They argue that there is to be some continuity between this

present world and the new heavens and new earth which are to come. In support of this position the following reasons have been given.

Reason # 1

First, in both 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1, the Greek word used in describing the “new heavens and new earth,” is *kainos*. That which is *kainos* in the Greek language is not necessarily that which is brand new in time, that which has never existed before. Thus in predicting a “new” (*kainos*) heaven and “new” (*kainos*) earth, the Bible does not necessarily mean that these things did not exist before. The idea of *kainos* could be that there has been a great qualitative change in comparison with what existed before.² The heavens and earth could be “renewed” and in this sense be thought of as “new” (*kainos*). We cannot assume therefore that 2 Peter 3 (or Rev. 21) is saying that the present heavens and earth are to be completely annihilated and replaced by something altogether different. Use of the word “new” (*kainos*) simply does not settle the issue for us.

Reason # 2

Second, the most basic rule of Scripture interpretation, that which we call *the analogy of Scripture*, says that each passage of Scripture must be interpreted in harmony with the rest of Scripture. The image given in Romans 8 strongly favors the interpretation of renewal rather than annihilation and replacement. Indeed, one could make no sense of the passage at all if the earth were to be destroyed. For if annihilation were the result, this earth which Romans 8 describes as longing for release from bondage would have its hopes completely dashed. The earth would be swept away. There would be no renewal at all. Futility would win. There would be no entrance for *this* creation into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It would vanish into nothing.

How then can such an interpretation be harmonized with passages such as 2 Peter 3, passages which speak of “new heavens and earth?” To be sure, phrases such as “the heavens will disappear...,” “the elements will be destroyed with fire,” and “the earth and everything in it will be

Reformed theologians have generally favored the position that the earth is to be renewed rather than annihilated.

laid bare" seem to suggest a complete annihilation of the present heavens and earth. But is this what they are saying? If it is, then 2 Peter 3 is in conflict with Romans 8. But if both passages belong to the word of God, they cannot be in conflict with one another. Somehow or other, both of them must be true in what they are teaching us about the future of the earth.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Perhaps the answer to our dilemma is that one of these descriptions is not literal, but figurative or symbolic. I believe that if we look closely at the two passages in question, we will see that 2 Peter 3 is the best candidate for a figurative interpretation.

Notice that the language of 2 Peter 3 is like the language found in the book of Revelation. This language is not literal in nature. For example, when we get to heaven, Jesus Christ will not appear to us as a "Lamb standing, as if slain" (Rev. 5:6). He will not have four legs and be covered in wool. He will not have a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth (Rev. 1:16). Rather, when we get to heaven, Jesus will look much as he did when he ascended into heaven. He will have a human body and human appearance. Revelation 5 *represents* Jesus by the picture of a lamb, just as Revelation 1 *represents* the glorified Jesus as having a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth. Neither is a literal picture of Jesus. But each tells us something *about* Jesus by means of a representation. John of course did see these things in the vision, but the vision was not a literal picture of what is in heaven. It was a visual representation of Biblical truth about heaven.

To see this point more clearly, notice that the Old Testament prophets often make use of figurative or symbolic language when speaking about God's great interventions into the world and the results of these interventions. Consider Isaiah 55:12:

You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

Trees as we know them do not have hands, thus they cannot clap. Mountains do not have vocal chords, thus they cannot shout. But who would interpret this verse literally? Isaiah is using figures of speech or symbolic representations, poetic expressions rather than literal descriptions.

Take another example. The prophecy of Joel concerning the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:17-21) tells of the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This prophecy says that on that day when the Spirit of God is poured out, "the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." These things did not happen at Pentecost, even though the prophecy is emphatically declared to have been fulfilled at that time (Acts 2:16). The fact that the moon was not turned into blood that day is not a failure of the prophecy, or an unfulfilled part of it. We are not to look for such a fulfillment at some future date. The language is figurative, symbolic, apocalyptic. It tells us of a momentous, cataclysmic intervention of God into history by means of figurative language. Joel was not talking about astronomy or meteorology when he made this prophecy. He was, however, talking about a transformation *just as profound* and *just as cataclysmic* as the sun being turned to darkness and the moon into blood. This is what justifies such strong language.

2 Peter 3:10-13 very much seems to be based on such Old Testament prophecies. Peter begins by mentioning the day of the Lord, which the Old Testament prophets typically described in apocalyptic terms, using the images of burning and melting (cf. Isa. 13:9ff., Jer. 46:10, Joel 2, Joel 3:15f., Amos 5:18-20, Mic. 1:4). The combination of darkness and gloom, together with fire and burning, show that one should not take each image literally, for the one excludes the other if taken literally.

If we take 2 Peter 3 as apocalyptic in nature, speaking of the end of this age in symbolic or figurative language, then we have removed the conflict with Romans 8. But instead of taking the language of annihilation in 2 Peter 3 in a figurative way, might we just as well have taken the language of renewal in Romans 8 in a figurative way?

I think not. Considering Romans 8, one cannot reasonably say that an anxiously waiting

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earth has entered into the freedom of the children of God if in fact what has happened is that the earth has been annihilated. If the earth is annihilated, then it does not enter into freedom. How can that which ceases to be enter into anything? So Romans 8 only makes sense in terms of renewal. 2 Peter 3, on the other hand, makes sense either in terms of renewal or in terms of annihilation. One can reasonably say that a renewal of that which had been greatly corrupted into something significantly different can be so extensive that it is *as if* the old had completely vanished and something entirely new had appeared. Since Romans 8 is not flexible in this way, the only way to preserve harmony between the two passages is to understand 2 Peter 3 in a figurative way.

God, who first set mankind in a beautiful garden, will do so once again.

Reason # 3

Third, further support for this understanding of Romans 8 and 2 Peter 3 can be found in Paul's handling of our salvation and the resurrection of our bodies. In 2 Cor. 5:18 he says, "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." Those who are in Christ are the same people they were before, though not the same kind of people they were before. They are transformed people, new creatures in Christ. Saul of Tarsus was not annihilated on the road to Damascus; he was regenerated.

Similarly, the idea of the renewal of the earth, rather than its annihilation and replacement, parallels what happens to our bodies. Though because of death our bodies now suffer decay into dust, yet we are to look for the resurrection of *our* bodies. Our resurrected bodies will be quite different from what they were before—that which is mortal then having put on immortality (cf. I Cor. 15:35-58)—but still it is *our bodies* which are to be raised. We are not simply given new bodies, entirely different from what we had before with no continuity between the two. The very concept of resurrection implies that there will be some continuity between our present bodies and the ones to come. Certainly it is this way with Christ's resurrected body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see..." (Luke 24:39).

As it is with regeneration and resurrection, so it is with the new heavens and earth. There will be a great transformation, but there will also be some continuity between the two such that one can legitimately say that it is the old which has become new.

RENEWAL NOT ANNIHILATION

In view of these arguments, it seems to me that the weight of evidence is in favor of the Reformed position, that the present heavens and earth are due for a great renewal at the second coming of Jesus Christ rather than complete annihilation. The extent of that renewal is so great, that one can truly speak of "new heavens and earth." New though it be, there will still be some continuity between what now exists and what will exist then. What was formerly cursed and in bondage will then enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. God, who first set mankind in a beautiful garden, will do so once again.

WHY WE BOTHER

Earlier we saw that even if all of creation is one day to be destroyed, we still have powerful reasons for taking good care of it now. Our own lives, and those of our descendants, crucially depend upon the earth's bounty, and all our lives are enriched by the goodness and beauty found in the earth. Also, working to care for the earth cooperates with God in the fulfillment of His purposes. He Himself sustains the creation, and makes Himself known through it. Clean air and water, and a balanced and healthy ecosystem, will reveal more of the Creator's glory than if we increase the effects of the curse through neglect and abuse of the world God has entrusted to our care.

If to these reasons we add that God has ongoing purposes for this earth which extend into eternity, then we have even more reason for preserving the goodness and beauty of the earth. God Himself does not intend to burn up the earth and throw it away. Our careful stewardship of the earth respects God's enduring purposes for the earth and cooperates with them. The way to honor our Creator most is by working in harmony with His own purposes. That

includes doing all we can to preserve and enhance the beauty and glory of the creation, and the life-giving and life-sustaining power He has implanted in it.

In 2 Peter 3 the question is asked: Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? Our analysis has shown us that everything is not literally to be destroyed, but rather is to be renewed by an all-consuming fire which purifies the creation from all that now corrupts it. Still, the question remains: what kind of people ought you to be? The answer is the same: holy and godly...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. Our study has shown us that the holiness and godliness to which we are called requires that we respect God's handiwork and purposes in creation, and work to preserve and enhance

it for the glory of God. We are servants whom God has left in charge of His house. He is coming back soon. Will He find it well cared for and preserved, or will He find it abused and polluted? Let us all labor to the end that when He returns, He will call us to Himself saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."

ENDNOTES

¹ See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (Attic Press, 1960), pp. 851ff., Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1939, 1941), pp. 736f., and Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 279ff.

² See the article on "New" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2 (Zondervan, 1976) pp. 669ff.

Let us all labor to the end that when He returns, He will call us to Himself saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."

The American Theological Library Association

Faith and Practice recently received some good news from the American Theological Library Association. After reviewing the last several issues of *Faith and Practice*, the ATLA has accepted us for full indexing in the *Index of Religious Periodicals* and *ATLA Database on CD-ROM*. This means that at every theological library (or at any library with a significant theological and biblical studies section), researchers will find our articles included in the *Index of Religious Periodicals*. So, for example, if a student is doing a paper on the subject of Baptism and is researching sources, he or she could find Bill Evans' "Rebaptism" article listed. Or, if a student was trying to get hold of all the published materials of John Blumenstein, he would find John's "Introduction to Baptism" article listed under "Blumenstein."

This inclusion in the *Index* makes our journal much more attractive for use and purchase by libraries. In addition, for those libraries that do not subscribe to *Faith and Practice*, the text

of the articles will also be available through a new Document Delivery Service, which means that researchers will be able to order copies of articles cited in the indexes. This inclusion is a big boon to the long term effectiveness of the ministry of *Faith and Practice*, and significantly contributes in a positive way to the influence of ARP scholars, pastors, and teachers in North America.

More specifically, *Faith and Practice* will be indexed in the following: *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, the *Index to Book Reviews in Religion*, *Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBRR 1975- on CD-ROM*, and the *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM*. These are all published by the American Theological Library Association, 820 Church Street, Evanston, IL, 60201-5613, E-mail: atla@atla.com. Find ATLA on the Internet at <http://atla.library.vanderbilt.edu/atla/home.html>.

The Ethics of Environmentalism

Kevin L. Burrell

Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song.¹

Its place next to the Gideons' Bible in these hotels attests to the reverence with which Leopold's work is treated today.

Rachel Carson's poetic words in *Silent Spring* (1962) are generally regarded as the world's first battle cry to concerned citizens to protest environmental irresponsibility. The issue at hand was the widespread use of DDT as a pesticide, and through Carson's efforts the chemical was eventually banned in the U.S. and regulated elsewhere. Since that time, the world has heard hundreds of other equally poetic appeals to stop pollution, save the rain forests, protect the dolphins, car pool, reduce, reuse, and recycle. Many of these suggestions are solid solutions to legitimate problems. Yet they raise other questions for Christians. What is our duty to the environment? And what is the basis for the current environmental ethic? In a nation that currently spends over \$140 billion a year on environmental protection, these are worthwhile questions. Obviously the issues are numerous, and there is no way to be comprehensive with such a broad set of themes. My intention, instead, is to present a series of vignettes, bringing to the fore some of the major trends in current environmental ethics. Namely, we will briefly look at the mainstream ethic that drives secular environmentalism, the tactics used by the movement to advance their causes, and the responses (both proper and improper) which Christians in the movement might exhibit.

THE LEOPOLDIAN TRAP

Any effort to define the case for an environmental ethic must address, first and foremost, Aldo Leopold's 1949 work *A Sand County Almanac*. Leopold was not a philosopher so

much as a naturalist, and as he sounded the call, he left it to others to develop the more formal arguments. But the last chapter of his book, entitled "The Land Ethic," continues to be foundational to any discussion of man's ecological responsibility to the environment. It is of such importance to the movement that, to cite one example, environmental groups in Vermont recently placed copies of this book in the hotel rooms of every inn along Route 30, one of the state's main thoroughfares. Its place next to the Gideons' Bible in these hotels attests to the reverence with which Leopold's work is treated today.

The first three-quarters of Leopold's book takes a naturalist's look at the delicate balance in nature exhibited through the changing of the seasons; Leopold merely observes and reflects upon the activities of the flora and fauna on his 120 acres in Wisconsin, pondering nature in the spirit of Muir or Audubon. But as he moves to the upshot of his ponderings, he contrasts his descriptions with explanations of the detrimental activities of man upon the land, calling for a new aesthetic, a new "land ethic." Leopold saw a historical progression in ethics, to which his ideas were a third and logical stage.

The first ethics dealt with the relation between individuals; the Mosaic Decalogue is an example. Later accretions dealt with the relation between the individual and society. The Golden Rule tries to integrate the individual to society; democracy to integrate social organization to the individual....There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. The land relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations....The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evo-

lutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. It is the third step in a sequence.²

From here, Leopold's unfolding argument hears back to the *telos* concept developed by Aristotle: just as every object has a formal, material, and efficient cause, so every object has a final cause or *telos*, a "end" for which it has been made. Immanuel Kant imported this idea into the realm of ethics in his discussion of the categorical imperative. Kant stated the teleological principle thus: "Rational nature exists as an end in itself....So act as to treat humanity, whether thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only."³ Leopold, though never quoting either Aristotle or Kant, would certainly agree with this. But for him, their arguments were not sufficient; objects beyond the rational also exist to fulfill a *telos*. Thus the dictum to treat humans as ends rather than means must be expanded to include other purpose-bearing creatures.

BIOTIC RIGHT

But what is this purpose? Leopold asserts that the purpose cannot be merely economic: "One basic weakness in a conservation system based wholly on economic motives is that most members of the land community have no economic value."⁴ An economic *telos*, Leopold explained, postulates that mankind stands at the top of the natural order. This philosophy would not do for Leopold; he wrote, "In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it."⁵ He is one citizen among many, equal in "rights" to the other non-human citizens, the flora and fauna of the land, which have a "biotic right" that is irrespective of their value to humans. But what determines this right? To this, Leopold proposes the *telos*; all of the components of nature exist as a part of the biotic community, a part of the land pyramid, and thus represent an essential part in the interactions of the ecosystem. In a subtle way, Leopold's stories throughout the first portions of the book have already argued this position. He suggests that to look at the world through a rabbit's eyes, for instance, we would see unique behavior, intention, and development. The rabbit has intrinsic

value; it exists for its own purposes. But it also serves the purpose of the larger community. It controls the growth of the plants in its community, and eventually provides food for an animal higher up the food chain, as its body provides nutrients for the soil.

So Leopold has explained his *telos* in communitarian rather than individualistic terms. The purpose of all things is seen in terms of the interdependent biotic community. An ethical system based on these grounds thus becomes readily apparent; Leopold states the principle as such: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."⁶ As a fellow citizen of our environment, our duty is to the natural order, to the biotic community at large.

It is this principle that is often taken up by the typical environmentalist today. Leopold's land ethic finds its way into practically any treatment of this subject. A case in point is John Rodman, in his article "Ecological Sensibility." Rodman calls for a theory of intrinsic value in nature "based upon the obligation principle that one ought not to treat with disrespect or use as a mere means anything that has a *telos* or end of its own—anything that is autonomous in the basic sense of having a capacity for internal self-direction and self-regulation."⁷

Of course, opening the front door to this broader definition invites a variety of philosophies to wander comfortably into the house and make themselves at home. Leopold envisions a world in which our obligation is to a community that is not made up merely of fellow human beings, but also of household pets, ferns, fungus, and the oak tree outside my window. Yet an overarching purpose runs through all these living beings; it is altruism, a living and dying for the benefit of others. Leopold eventually embraced the philosophy of the Russian mystic Peter Ouspensky, who believed that every particle of the universe was infused with "spirit," reinforcing Leopold's belief in the "indivisibility of the earth."⁸ Leopold's followers often follow suit with this version of pantheistic thinking. Sensing a unity in nature can easily lead to advocating a union with nature, a spiritual oneness that pervades all. Regrettably, this philosophy undergirds the mainstream en-

Sensing a unity in nature can easily lead to advocating a union with nature, a spiritual oneness that pervades all.

vironmental movement today.

GAIA: "THE NEW BIOLOGY"

This scientific spirituality is seen most starkly in the "new biology" of the past two decades or so, and in the Gaia hypothesis originated by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. Lovelock's *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979) posits that our planet is a self-regulating system and that organisms are not passive participants in the biosphere, but active agents which interact to modify and control the chemical and physical conditions of the planet. In short, Lovelock's approach to biology suggests that the planet itself is a "living" (in a non-genetic sense)⁹ organism, as dependent upon its inhabitants as its inhabitants are dependent on it. This flies in the face of the traditional biology of the modernist era, which affirms that solely geological processes produced life-favorable conditions, to which organisms simply adapted. Lovelock believes that life controls and sets the pace for the ecosystem. Physical and biotic conditions evolved together, says Lovelock, and thus the biosphere is a self-organizing "cybernetic" system with internal—rather than external—controls: "We think that conditions on the Earth are just right for life because we and the rest of life, by our own struggles, have made and kept it so."¹⁰ The biotic community suggested by Leopold has, in Lovelock's hypothesis, become its own nurturing mother.

Clearly if our system is self-regulating and dependent upon its inhabitants, the call for wise stewardship becomes infinitely more urgent. We need an ethic for the environment because we are damaging the organism of which we are an intricate part. We have now moved beyond Leopold's hope of changing the role of our species from conqueror to citizen. We are now one with the system, no longer merely a citizen of the community but an organ of the larger body, which depends upon us and cannot live without us. Lovelock's terminology is important to note here. The term *Gaia* refers to the Greek goddess, "Mother Earth," and was suggested to Lovelock by his friend, the novelist William Golding.¹¹ Indeed, Lovelock's biology takes on many of the trappings of "Mother-Earth-ism," referring to his hypothesis as "she" and to his

studies as his "quest for Gaia."¹² Lovelock claims scientific objectivity and offers much data to his defense. But there is a pantheistic spirituality undergirding it all. Lovelock speaks boldly:

Gaia is Mother Earth. Gaia is immortal. She is the eternal source of life. She does not need to reproduce herself as she is immortal. She is certainly the mother of us all, including Jesus.... Gaia is not a tolerant mother. She is rigid and inflexible, ruthless in the destruction of whoever transgresses. Her unconscious objective is that of maintaining a world adapted to life. If we men hinder this objective we will be eliminated without pity.¹³

We must ask ourselves how much "scientific objectivity" this imagery contains. The planet is referred to as simultaneously unconscious and emotional, and given god-like attributes, even referred to as "conceivably a part of God... and we are a part of her."¹⁴

The LINDISFARNE ASSOCIATION

Attempts to make this palatable to Christians have gone to ridiculous ends. William Irwin Thompson, editor of *Gaia: A Way of Knowing*, writes, "The theological idea, then, of the mystical body of Christ put forth by St. Paul, is a vision of a planetary being, a cell in which we as individuals are organelles."¹⁵ Gregory Bateson, writing in the same volume, embraces pantheism, decrying "the separation between God and His Creation; that sort of thing doesn't exist anymore."¹⁶ Lovelock has opened the door for members of the scientific community to speak of "the Age of Light" or "the New Age" or "Mother Earth." In fact, Thompson, Bateson, and Lovelock are all members of the Lindisfarne Association, an "ecological" New Age group headquartered at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.

It seems clear why thinking Christians reel at this kind of language. And since it represents environmentalism, Christians often react against environmental efforts as well. Is it surprising to us that some outspoken Christians were seen at Earth Day 1990 yelling at demonstrators, "Forget the Earth, save yourselves"? Environmental

It seems clear why thinking Christians reel at this kind of language.

journalist Jan Nunley explains, "Some of the negative reaction by conservative Christians to environmental issues is based on the fear that monism and pantheism are behind calls for caring for the earth—a sneak attack on monotheism."¹⁷ And this can be a legitimate fear. At the same time, Christians mistakenly scoff at the movement for this reason alone. If we are skeptical of the environmental cause, we must develop stronger arguments that involve more than simply attacking the character and spirituality of the movement's participants. Let us for a moment look beyond the spirituality of the movement, focusing instead on some of its tactics.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Dr. W. D. Ross has found in his treatment of ethics that the distinction between "act" and "action" is a useful terminology. In his explanation, an "act" refers to the visible exterior of any given human behavior, while the "action" looks inward to motive and intention. Thus an act's "rightness" or "wrongness" is judged by its suitability in the given situation, while an action's "goodness or badness" is judged by the praiseworthiness of the motive. It follows then that an action (motive) can be good even if the act is wrong, and that an action can be bad even if the act is right. Regrettably, much of the environmental movement suffers from a case of "good motive, wrong act." Sadly, sometimes not even the motive is good.

ECOTAGE

At the grassroots end of the environmental spectrum are such organizations as Greenpeace, EarthFirst!, and other activist associations, many of which promote "ecological sabotage" as a valid means of addressing their concerns.¹⁸ The term "ecological sabotage," or "ecotage" for short, encompasses these acts of deliberate subversion directed at those people, activities, and organizations which are deemed a threat to the environment. Some classic examples include placing metal spikes in old-growth trees to slow down a logger's chain saw, riding in the path of a harpoon between a whal-

ing ship and its victim, or simply being inconveniently placed at a strategic time, be it buried in front of a bulldozer, perched eighty feet up in a threatened tree, or anchored off the shore of an island scheduled for nuclear testing. For ecological saboteurs, drastic times call for drastic measures. They defend their actions by appeals to such historic figures as Martin Luther King, Jr. (in 1990, EarthFirst! organized a "Redwood Summer" patterned after 1964's Mississippi Summer movement) or the American Revolution's Sons of Liberty. Their actions cause severe economic damage to the industries which become their targets. One EarthFirster optimistically wrote in the organization's newsletter:

...ecotage in the United States today is probably costing government and industry 20 to 25 million (dollars) annually. This represents money industry was not able to use to deforest public lands, sink oil wells in the backcountry, invest in more destructive equipment, influence politicians with campaign contributions... It represents money the Forest Service was not able to use to build new roads, or hide deficit sales...¹⁹

The philosophical and political problem with these actions is obvious to the sensible reader. "In a free nation there is surely an implicit right to *choose* to break the law," writes Paul Wilkinson, author of *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, and the ecoteurs yell a rousing amen. But breaking the law is not a right, and there are liberty-limiting principles to which each of us must adhere for society to function properly. Worse yet, ecoteurs base their actions on a consequentialist ethic, embracing the idea that the ends justify the means. As Christians we cannot concur; an act is good or bad based on its relation to the unchanging law of God, and is not redeemed based on utilitarian grounds. At best (and there is worse), ecotage is a case of good motive, but desperately wrong act.

However, it is not fair to end the discussion here. Radicals of this kind make up such a small percentage of the environmentally concerned that it would be a misrepresentation to present these acts as condoned by the movement as a whole. Most environmentalists wince at

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EarthFirst!'s suggestions of violence and monkey-wrenching. EarthFirst! does not represent the mainstream of the environmental movement.

THE MEDIA MASQUERADE

Before going much further, allow me to state my convictions. I *do* believe that we have an environmental problem. Most of the issues with which environmentalists deal are legitimate issues. The difficulty lies in the manner with which these problems are presented to the public. Even if environmental concerns are valid, environmentalist tactics often blow the issues out of proportion. The scientific community concurs; at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a group of more than 250 leading scientists and economists (including 27 Nobel laureates) wrote this critique, known as the Heidelberg Appeal:

We are...worried, at the dawn of the 21st century, at the emergence of an irrational ideology that is opposed to scientific and industrial progress and impedes economic and social development...We intend to assert science's responsibility and duties toward society as a whole. We do, however, forewarn the authorities in charge of our planet's destiny against decisions which are supported by pseudoscientific arguments or false and irrelevant data....The greatest evils which stalk our earth are ignorance and oppression, not science, technology, and industry.²⁰

The co-authors of the recent book *Eco-Sanity* actually postulate that most Americans live in a cleaner, safer environment today than they have at any time in the past half-century.²¹ Obviously this flies in the face of the usual words we hear regarding the health of our planet. So who is right? Both sides refer to the "leading experts" and "new research" for their interpretation of the data. Unfortunately, scientific talk is not always grounded in scientific accuracy. Yet environmentalists (and enviro-skeptics as well) often use the scientific talk of "pop science" to try to create certainty where certainty does not exist, and the public is prone to buy a scientific argument *carte blanche* simply because it sounds scientific. What better example could there be than

the global warming hypothesis which, though still highly contested in scientific circles, has brought about the signing of an international Global Climate Change Treaty²² which will cost the U.S. taxpayers millions of dollars in control measures of dubious warrant?

As if scientific agendas are not enough of a barrier to public knowledge, the concerned citizen must also filter facts through the distortions of the media, who are notoriously selective in their presentations. Cute spotted owls draw the sympathy of viewers; burly unshaven loggers generally do not. When the media creates this contrast as a spotlight on the six o'clock news, viewers tend to vote with their hearts, not with their heads. And the media is more apt to attract viewers when it deals with issues which can possibly threaten them personally. Thus the public receives its information in bold strokes, such as in this report by CNN reporter Bernard Shaw:

This (global warming) is a story about human folly—mankind's attempt to engineer a better place to live, to improve upon nature with inventions such as refrigeration, foam packing, and electronics. But the man-made chemicals used in pursuit of the good life have all put life on earth in jeopardy. The chemicals have punched a hole in the sky.... Already there's a moral to the story, and that is: Nature may not always be able to recover from the abuses of modern civilization.²³

Obviously, some assumptions went into this report that may or may not have been wise to make. And the bias is clear; Charles Alexander, the science editor of *Time* magazine, explains, "I would freely admit that on this issue [the environment] we have crossed the boundary from news reporting to advocacy."²⁴

Thankfully, some environmental journalists are beginning to rethink their tactics. Ken Schneider, a national correspondent for the *New York Times*, has come under frequent attack from all sides because of his suggestions that environmental misinformation often drives the cause. "I submit that we are not doing enough to follow the new data and the new debate wherever it leads," he writes.²⁵ In the case of dioxin pollution, which he has come under fire for question-

Even if environmental concerns are valid, environmentalist tactics often blow the issues out of proportion.

ing—despite conclusions by the World Health Organization that contradict the Environmental Protection Agency's exposure safety levels—Schneider suggests, "Among the tenets of this environmental evangelism is to view most toxic compounds at any level of exposure as deadly to people and animals. It equates 'good environmentalism' with 'more and tougher' regulations and seeks to smear those who raise questions about the effectiveness of the rules as 'anti-environmentalists.'"²⁶

Then whom do we trust? How do we know when we are getting unbiased statistics with no hidden agenda? Dixie Lee Ray, author of *Environmental Overkill*, offers advice which she would, I assume, apply even to her *own* novel scientific commentaries: "Look for evidence, not for arguments; discount any unsupported assertions, even if they come from an eminent authority, and then make up your own mind based on what facts you can assemble and on your own common sense."²⁷ As Schneider attests, "When it comes to environmental protection, one of the gravest risks of all is misinformation masquerading as fact."²⁸ We must be on guard and avoid the lure of simple emotionalism. In Ray's words, "Lawyers might sway juries with rhetorical genius, ministers might inspire their flocks, and political talk shows might be enlivened by the cut and thrust of debate. But science is about the sober weighing of evidence.... Science isn't a popularity poll, and sincere impassioned rhetoric won't change reality."²⁹

AL GORE IN THE BALANCE

The most popular current treatment of environmental ethics comes from the political champion of the environmental movement, current Vice President Al Gore, in his book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. It should be noted up front that Gore's book gives James Lovelock a favorable nod; the Gaia hypothesis "evokes a spiritual response in many of those who hear it... awe, wonder, a sense of mystery—a spiritual response—when one reflects on its deeper meaning."³⁰ The thought of the interconnectedness in nature appeals to many environmentalists for obvious reasons, and Gore is no exception.³¹

Gore's book is a mixed bag. Most of his sci-

entific arguments are presented as undeniable proof, following the same unfortunate trend that I have just discussed. And he has also come under fire for what appears to be a highly statist and idealistic approach to the problem, what he calls a "Global Marshall Plan." But the political ramifications of Gore's plan are beyond my intent here. Our concern is his ethical motivation, discussed in his chapter titled "Environmentalism of the Spirit." He opens up his ethical discussion as follows:

Whether we believe that our dominion derives from God or from our own ambition, there is little doubt that the way we currently relate to the environment is wildly inappropriate. But in order to change, we have to address some fundamental questions about our purpose in life, our capacity to direct the powerful inner forces that have created this crisis, and who we are.³²

As a professing Baptist, Gore attempts to give a Christian position on the relationship of man to the environment; he also draws in arguments from other major religions, in the end creating a sort of multicultural spiritual response. Thankfully, he does not blame Christians for the environmental problem, as so many advocates tend to do.³³ Gore writes:

Here in the West, some have charged—inaccurately, I believe—that the Judeo-Christian tradition chartered the relentless march of civilization to dominate nature, beginning with the creation story of Genesis, in which humankind is granted "dominion" over the earth.... But this is a cartoon version of the Judeo-Christian tradition.³⁴

As Gore explains, "the biblical concept of dominion is quite different from the concept of domination," and we as Christians are "charged with the duty of stewardship."³⁵ But from here, the waters of Gore's argument get murky. He explains the philosophical difference between Plato and Aristotle in order to relate these concepts to Christian theology. While Plato looked at a person's true abode as being in the world of

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Our responsibilities to the environment must not be viewed simply as akin to polishing the brass on the Titanic.

the "Forms," Aristotle the empiricist tried to bring mankind back down to earth. Thus Plato espoused an other-worldly philosophy, while Aristotle saw mankind as an integral part of the natural world. Gore suggests that a "strain of Christian thought" borrowed Plato's ideas about man (later resurfacing in Descartes), and thus Christians lost touch with their integral role in this world, the natural world.³⁶ Gore holds forth Aristotle's model as the upright one, identifying in it a better understanding of the human role *within* the natural order.

There are two major problems with this analysis. First, our sense of distinctness from the natural order is not in fact an importation from Greek philosophy. Rather, it is an integral part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. We can hardly call it wrong (and then blame Plato) to look at this natural visible world with a certain sense of detachment. If anyone must be blamed for this "otherworldliness," it must be Peter, Paul, John, Isaiah, or some other biblical writer. Consider these verses:

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in this world...(1 Pet. 2:11).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea (Rev. 21:1).

For this world in its present form is passing away (1 Cor. 7:31b).

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13).

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind (Isa. 65:17).

Gore attributes to Plato what Christians attribute to the promises of heaven. Granted, there are extreme and inappropriate versions of the Christian understanding. For instance, former Secretary of the Interior James Watt has become famous for justifying offshore drilling practices

on the grounds that God meant for us to subdue the world, which is headed for a divinely-appointed apocalypse anyway. Our responsibilities to the environment must not be viewed simply as akin to polishing the brass on the Titanic. But neither can we attribute our other-worldly bent to Plato's concept of spiritual detachment.

Gore's other problem is more pertinent to our prior discussion. Unfortunately, as he continues his ethical arguments, Gore begins to fall into the Leopoldian trap. Aligning himself philosophically with Aristotle, he quickly begins to say things that suggest his belief in mankind's oneness with nature. At the height of this theological folly is the statement, "It is my own belief that the image of God can be seen in every corner of creation, even in us, but only faintly."³⁷ Regardless of what he might have *meant* to say here, there is a huge difference between seeing the glory of God as expressed in his general revelation, and recognizing *all* of nature as the *imago Dei*. This latter title belongs to humans and humans alone, and any attempts to assign this quality to the rest of creation ignore the language of Genesis 1. Only of mankind did God speak of creating "in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Gore has mistakenly bought into Aldo Leopold's thinking, where mankind is only a citizen of the earth, a single part of the creation. This is not acceptable Christian doctrine, leaving one to question where Gore received his theological training. Gore concludes the chapter: "By experiencing nature at its fullest—our own and that of all creation—with our senses and with our spiritual imagination, we can glimpse, 'bright shining as the sun,' an infinite image of God."³⁸ How close does this sentence border on pantheism? Or has it indeed crossed the border? I cannot imagine a more disappointing conclusion to this chapter.

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO A GROANING CREATION

I have attempted so far to highlight some of the predominant thinking in the environmental movement today, and perhaps I have painted too dim of a picture. Much of the philosophy and tactics of the movement have been portrayed in a rather negative light, and this is not where I wish to leave the issue. We have a responsibility

to the environment, as the other articles of this issue well attest, and we must respond. But we must do so in a distinctly Christian way, taking up the issue while cautiously *not* taking up the philosophy that represents the mainstream of the movement. We must ask ourselves what the Christian voice in the environmental cause should be saying. I suggest, briefly, three items:

1) Recognize the problem

It is disappointing to read books which attempt to prove that there is *no* environmental problem. To suggest this is to simply ignore a wealth of evidence. As I hope I have demonstrated, there is indeed "evidence" that *needs* to be ignored, because it is not real evidence at all. But we cannot be blind to the fact that real environmental issues do exist. The Chernobyl accident, the burning of the Cuyahoga River, and the influx of hospital waste on the shores of New Jersey—problems like these raise serious questions that we would be unwise to ignore. It is easy for us to become callous to the issues because the philosophy and tactics of the environmental movement are sometimes bad; we must resist this tendency.

2) Avoid the emotionalism

A major driving force in the environmental movement today is that it appeals to our spirit and our emotions. But this is also one of its greatest dangers. As our spirits are exhorted, we can easily be caught off guard and fall into Leopold and Lovelock's pantheistic philosophies. As those in the movement appeal to our emotions, we can easily gloss over the facts as they present themselves. Environmental science, if it is truly a science, must be grounded on a rational foundation. We must be wary of exaggerations, emotional appeals, media distortions, and the like. Science wrestles with the facts. We would be wise to question any scientific endeavor which fails to present these facts adequately, settling instead for an emotional agenda, or making assumptions without proper grounds. Poetry is not enough; our concern must be gentle but cautious.

3) Search the Scriptures

Gore was right in citing the Christian responsibility to stewardship over the land. But the same verses from which he derives this responsibility (Gen. 1:26-30) clearly demonstrate that man bears a *special* relationship to the creation. As the image of God, we are not equal citizens with all the other creatures of "Mother Earth." We must not be confused on this issue; as Tony Campolo states, "Christian orthodoxy requires the hierarchy presented by Scripture. *All of life is not of equal value.*"³⁹ To maintain human "oneness" with nature is to maintain intellectual separateness from the Bible. Instead, we affirm that human beings are representatives of God and His image bearers in a world whose greatest environmental catastrophe took place in the Garden of Eden; since then we know that "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8:22). The word of God is clear that we have a responsibility to this world; Isaiah and Jeremiah, for instance, chastise Israel for poor land stewardship. And as the psalmist reminds us that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psa. 24:1), we must recognize that the purpose of this world is to glorify God; this is the *telos* of nature. And so, as Romans 8 asserts, we must look forward to nature's redemption, but we must recognize that it is *God* who ultimately will redeem it, not us. Gore's dream that "we might find it possible to resanctify the earth"⁴⁰ regrettably places this hope in the wrong time frame, and in the hands of the wrong agent. Yet we maintain a responsibility to be stewards of the earth as we await its full redemption.

It is easy for us to become callous to the issues because the philosophy and tactics of the environmental movement are sometimes bad; we must resist this tendency.

ENDNOTES

¹ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 103.

² Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine, 1966 edition), pp. 238-239.

³ As quoted in Samuel Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), p. 318.

⁴ Leopold, p. 246.

⁵ Leopold, p. 240.

⁶ Leopold, p. 262.

⁷ John Rodman, "Ecological Sensibility," in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees: Basic Issues in*

Environmental Ethics (Belmont: CA: Wadsworth), 1986, p. 166.

⁸ Michael Coffman, *Saviors of the Earth? The Politics and Religion of the Environmental Movement* (Chicago: Northfield, 1994), p. 72.

⁹ Eugene Odum, *Ecology and our Endangered Life Support Systems* (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 1989), pp. 59-60.

¹⁰ James Lovelock, "Gaia: A Model for Planetary and Cellular Dynamics," in *Gaia: A Way of Knowing: Political Implications for the New Biology*, Ed. William Irwin Thompson (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1987), p. 84.

¹¹ Lovelock, p. 88, (Golding is best known for his novel *Lord of the Flies*).

¹² Lovelock, p. 96 and elsewhere (frequently).

¹³ James Lovelock, *Orion Nature Quarterly*, vol. 8: no. 1, 1989, p. 58, as quoted in Coffman, p. 145.

¹⁴ James Lovelock, *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of our Living Earth* (New York: Bantam, 1990), p. 204, as quoted in Coffman, p. 148.

¹⁵ William Irwin Thompson, "The Cultural Implications of the New Biology," in *Gaia: A Way of Knowing*, p. 25.

¹⁶ Gregory Bateson, "Men are Grass: Metaphor and the World of Mental Process," in *Gaia: A Way of Knowing*, p. 41.

¹⁷ Jan Nunley, "When God Is Green: Reporting on the Connection Between Religion and Ecology Is Coming of Age," *SEJournal*, Fall, 1992.

¹⁸ Greenpeace is well-known for its unorthodox actions of awareness-raising, but it must be noted that these people are fairly tame compared to other groups (such as EarthFirst! and its founder, Dave Foreman). Most of Greenpeace's current demonstrations are oriented towards passive civil disobedience.

¹⁹ "Dear Ned Ludd," in *EF! Newsletter*, Feb. 2, 1990.

²⁰ October 15, 1992, actions stemming from the Earth Summit in Rio that summer.

²¹ Joseph Bast, Peter Hill, and Richard Rue, *Eco-Sanity: A Common-Sense Guide to Environmentalism* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1994), p. 9.

²² Bast, et al, p. 9f.

²³ Dixie Lee Ray, *Environmental Overkill: Whatever Happened to Common Sense?* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1993), p. 176.

²⁴ Ray, p. 171.

²⁵ Keith Schneider, "Nature of Attacks War-rants Reflection," *SEJournal*, Fall, 1993.

²⁶ Schneider.

²⁷ Ray, p. 29.

²⁸ Schneider.

²⁹ Ray, p. 29.

³⁰ Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), p. 264.

³¹ Coffman addresses this quotation and, sadly, does so very poorly. Coffman writes that "Gore puts his blessing on Gaia in glowing spiritual terms" (p. 148). This severely twists Gore's words; Gore in fact simply says that this is a type of science that speaks to our spirits. Coffman also suggests that a later quotation of Gore's, which states "could offer us new insights into the nature of human experience" refers to goddess worship, thus encouraging paganism. But Gore's quotation refers to archeological scholarship and "a better understanding of a religious heritage preceding our own by so many thousands of years" (p. 260). Coffman's misrepresentations of these comments by Gore are unfortunate and disappointing to see in a book which does otherwise offer some helpful insights.

³² Gore, p. 238.

³³ More liberal theologians such as H. Paul Santmire are much harder on Christian theology and its detriment to the environment. See *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

³⁴ Gore, pp. 242-243.

³⁵ Gore, p. 243.

³⁶ Gore, pp. 249-252.

³⁷ Gore, p. 265.

³⁸ Gore, p. 265.

³⁹ Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshipping Nature* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), p. 181.

⁴⁰ Gore, p. 263.

A Melancholy Moment

Joel Gillespie

I'm in the office and it's a November Monday. Outside my window the seasons go round and round. Despite my stuckness inside, God gives me joy looking through a window to His world out there. And I take moments to soak it in. As I kick back in my chair, a window pane neatly frames one tree, one visually noisy maple tree across the parking lot. Thankfully, due to my angle of view, I can see neither the parking lot nor the cars. It is as if they are not even there. The morning sun shining from behind me spotlights the tree. For a blessed moment, the tree is my entire world.

By what grace do I get to sit here and fill my sight with all shades of orange? I don't know the names for the different ways orange looks, and I am not really interested in a taxonomy of color. But the effect of all the almost-red to almost-yellow, mixed up and curled around together in patterns no one would have thought of—the effect is joy for me. By what love do I get to feel this fullness?

But why do joy and sadness feel so much alike? I had a dream last night I can't remember. For some reason in the dream, I wept and moaned with sadness. Then I awoke, and felt no sadness at all, yet I remembered feeling that way in the dream, even though I don't know why I did. The joy I feel before this tree reminds me of the sadness I felt in the dream. Every few seconds, a leaf falls almost straight down in the still air. In the petiole of the leaf, right where it joins the stem, the cells commit suicide, and the leaf breaks off. One falls, then another, then another, and then they're gone. No more orange. No more blast of morning color to greet me as I open my office door and settle into my chair.

This beauty like all beauty does not last. Soon I will see through the trunks and branches to the road and have to watch cars. I've never had joy over watching a car. Stop falling leaves! Don't go away, swathes of orange! Don't grow up, children! Don't move away, friend! Oh that

I could freeze-frame the moment! No wonder joy and sadness go together.

Once, when I was younger, I had no place to hang my happiness, no place to beam my joy, no place to pour my sadness. I was alone in the universe. We were all alone in the universe. And then I knew I wasn't alone after all. There was One who brooded over this bent world. Before I didn't know what to do with all the joys that rose up within me. Maybe if I studied and dissected and taxonomized my joy would be complete. Then I learned simply to say, "Thank you." It made all the difference.

I sat beside the creek at English L'Abri and read Romans 8:18-27 over and over. I wept, and laughed, and finally knew that the sadness and joy would find fulfillment one day. I sang a few hymn lines that came to mind. Soon all would be right, and creation would no longer groan, nor would I groan with it and have dreams of sadness. No more by its rhythms and changes and fading beauties would creation stir up longings for wholeness and completeness and permanency. Is that what it does? Does the longing of creation in fact mirror our own longings?

I think when I sit by a tree in the New Earth I will have only joy. But will there not still be seasons, and fadings, and leafings, and disappearings? Will the New Earth be tilted on its axis? It's hard to imagine life without changes. But it's hard for me to imagine changes without sorrows. Will the fleeting color of the tree, which now signals shorter days and a kind of dying, then no longer cause a pang of emptiness along with the well spring of joy? I can't imagine that such feelings will be allowed, will be possible, in the New Earth and New Heaven. Yet today, looking out my window, I can't imagine not feeling the pang with the pleasure. Will the Lord's light, by which it says we shall see, somehow bend and change, grow and fade, to make seasons? I hope so. Will diversity and richness end? I think not. As to how it will work, as to how there will be changing and diversity and leafing and unleafing I do not know. But I look forward to seeing. Somehow, however it works, all will be good and whole and full and complete. There will be no more groaning of creation. There will be no more sadness in dreams. There will be no more tears. Joy without sadness. Joy unmixed. It awaits.

**Stop falling
leaves! Don't
go away,
swathes of
orange! Don't
grow up, chil-
dren! Don't
move away,
friend!**

A Literary Ancestry of the Ecology Movement

E. Kate Stewart

"And as I was walking there, and looked up on the sky and clouds; there came into my mind a sweet sense of the majesty and grace of God that I know not how to express."

I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looked up on the sky and clouds; there came into my mind a sweet sense of the majesty and grace of God that I know not how to express. After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered....God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything: in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water; and all nature....I often used to sit and view the moon for a long time, and so in the daytime spent much time in viewing the clouds and the sky to behold the sweet glory of God in these things, in the meantime, singing forth with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer....I felt God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm (Jonathan Edwards, *Personal Narrative*, 1740).¹

In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and particle of God (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, 1836).²

Long since, in this part of our circumjacent wood, I had found out for myself a little hermitage. It was a kind of leafy cave, high upward into the air, among the midmost branches of a white-pine tree. A wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and, after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees....It was an admirable place to make verses, tuning the rhythm to the breezy symphony that so often stirred among the vine-leaves; or to meditate an essay for the Dial, in which the many tongues of Nature whispered mysteries, and seemed to ask only a little stronger puff of wind, to speak out the solution of its riddle. Being so previous to air-currents, it was just the nook, too, for the enjoyment of a cigar. This hermitage was my one exclusive possession, while I counted myself a brother of the socialists. It symbolized my individuality, and aided me in keeping it inviolate (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, 1852).³

Withdrawing from society, Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan divine of the Great Awakening, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the "bishop" (as William Ellery Channing designated him) of Transcendentalism, and Miles Coverdale, the narrator of Hawthorne's novel, each discovers nature's beauty and variety. In their solitary retreats they learn lessons about life and eternity.

EDWARDS

Since he is best known for "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Jonathan Edwards is remembered primarily as the author of such lines as: "Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there

are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight" or "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked."⁴ The imagery in the *Personal Narrative*, therefore, startles some readers. Popular misconceptions about the Puritans dictate that their austerity precludes a world filled with beauty, let alone a world which includes a God of wisdom and love.

In his solitary sojourns in nature, Jonathan Edwards understood more fully and more completely the sovereign God and his personal relationship with Him. On several occasions in the *Personal Narrative* Edwards notes that greater understanding about the character of God or some new insight into his own spiritual condition resulted when he "retired into a solitary place" to contemplate.

EMERSON

Emerson too gains greater self-knowledge while in the woods. Despite the vast differences in their theological perspectives (and some might argue that Emerson had no theology since he found even the Unitarians too rigid), Edwards and Emerson can seem amazingly in accord in their expressions about nature's glory. Edwards' view of God in *Personal Narrative* differs sharply from Emerson's view of Him in *Nature*. In his treatise Edwards often emphasizes that he is subject to the authority and providence of God. Emerson, on the other hand, becomes one with God when he transcends the physical world and becomes, as he notes in the essay, the "transparent eye-ball." The deification of the individual and the pantheistic leanings found in "Nature" and other works caused Charles Hodge and other Reformed theologians of the day to object rather strongly to Emersonian philosophy.

HAWTHORNE

Since he contributed to *The Dial*, a periodical which served as the voice of Transcendentalism, Hawthorne's Coverdale, if not a card-carrying member, at least had distinct leanings toward the worldview espoused by Emerson and his circle. As Edwards and Emerson had done,

Coverdale gains insight into his own character when he communes with nature. Absent from Coverdale's hermitage, however, is any thought of God. The individual becomes even more sacrosanct than he does in Emerson's woods. Although he had not procured a clear title, Coverdale asserts that he owns the verdant grotto.

SHIFTING CULTURAL CLIMATE

Each of these passages features a first-person narrator. But as I read and analyze them, the "I" of Edwards seems much smaller than the "I's" of Emerson and Hawthorne. Both the waning view of the sovereign God and the waxing of the ego portray rather vividly the cultural, social, and religious drift of the United States. Between the hundred years separating Edwards from Emerson and Hawthorne, the ideological temper of the country had shifted drastically. Oddly enough, those changes have influenced the modern ecology movement.

We cannot question Edwards' undeniable faith in and devotion to the sovereign Lord. Yet he was a product of the Age of Reason, an age which sought rational explanations for the mysteries of the universe, which cautioned against overzealousness, and which valued equipoise in all things ranging from architecture to finely crafted heroic couplets.

Reformed theologian though he was, Edwards in his writings reflects well the ideological climate of the first half of the eighteenth century. In *Personal Narrative*, for example, he expresses concern that a significant spiritual experience in his life had been fueled more by mere "affectation" than by reasoned faith. Thus Edwards shows that mere feelings should not be used as indicators of a true faith. He seeks confirmation of his faith in rationality and finds that confirmation in such concrete elements of the physical world as a thunderstorm.

Two notable, but not unrelated, events occurred in the period between Edwards' death in 1758 and Emerson's birth in 1803 and Hawthorne's in 1804 which signaled a drift away from the logical world to one which prized "affectation." The philosophical climate shifted from staid Neoclassicism of the Age of Reason to heady Romanticism. Political changes saw America evolve from the provincial to the re-

But as I read and analyze them, the "I" of Edwards seems much smaller than the "I's" of Emerson and Hawthorne.

publican when the upstart thirteen took the name The United States of America.

In contrast to the temper of the Age of Reason, Romanticism emphasizes individuality, unrestrained emotion, and idealism. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution contain tacitly Romantic language. We read in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" and are granted such "unalienable Rights" as "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." The Preamble of the Constitution, among other things, establishes "a more perfect Union" and secures "the blessings of liberty."

Emerson and Hawthorne matured in an age which emphasized increasingly individual liberty and individual freedom of conscience within the context of establishing that "more perfect (i.e., ideal) union." The society in which Edwards grew up, on the other hand, had emphasized public concerns instead of private or individual ones. Little wonder then that when the three diverse personalities ventured into nature that three different "I's" sallied forth.

Throughout the nineteenth century the sense of self became more prominent.⁵ Self-indulgence would escalate in the twentieth century; with the Lost Generation capering in pre-Depression high-jinks à la Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in the 1920s; with the disciples of Jean Paul Sartre wearing black turtlenecks and suffering nausea in the 1940s; with the Beats howling and rejecting convention in the 1950s; with the hippies raising consciousness and loving freely in the 1960s; with the Yuppies building what Tom Wolfe termed a "bonfire of the vanities" in the 1980s; with the open-minded public declaring that all individuals (evangelical Christians excepted) have absolute freedom of choice in the 1990s.

HEMINGWAY

Perhaps nothing illuminates more effectively this ideological shifting sand than juxtaposing a passage from Edwards and one from Ernest Hemingway. Earlier I cited the line from "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" which evokes the image of God's holding a person over the pit of hell "much as one holds a spider...over the fire." In *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), as he watches his wife die, Frederic Henry reminisces:

Once in camp I put a log on top of the fire and it was full of ants. As it commenced to burn, the ants swarmed out and went first toward the centre where the fire was....I remember thinking at the time that it was the end of the world and a splendid chance to be a messiah and lift the log off the fire and throw it out where the ants could get off onto the ground. But I did not do anything but throw a tin cup of water on the log, so that I would have the cup empty to put whiskey in before I added water to it. I think the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants.⁶

In the twentieth century world, man replaces God as the one who "holds you over the pit of hell." As the sole authority, man makes choices concerning life and death.

From Edwards to Emerson to Hawthorne to Hemingway and beyond, we see God fading further and further into the landscape. Into this intellectual and social environment with its small concept of God emerges the ecology movement.

For many evangelical Christians the various modern-day movements to save and to protect the environment are tainted because of their close association with other non-environmental agendas, agendas which Christians typically might reject. In a fragmented and fallen society which assigns (often carelessly) labels to everyone and everything and because of guilt by association, the conservative Christian community rejects many of the causes which seek to preserve the rain forest, protest clear-cutting, or protect endangered species.

Environmentalists of various sorts would likely adopt philosophical positions more closely aligned with Emerson than with Edwards. They might encounter difficulty feeling "God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm," but they might easily identify with Emerson's notion that nature can conquer disgrace and calamity.

Any proponent of a "save-the-earth" campaign will likely admit that both Edwards and Emerson view the physical world positively. Yet many would question the validity of Edwards' experiences simply because Edwards saw God in the environment. Emerson's experiences, on the other hand, allow the individual to control

Environmentalists of various sorts would likely adopt philosophical positions more closely aligned with Emerson than with Edwards.

his surroundings, thus losing the restrictions placed on him by an omnipotent and moral God. In short, individuals often prefer communing with a creation which places no obligations upon them, while dismissing the Creator.

Most assuredly the Christian should exercise responsibility in caring for nature. Scripture offers ample testimony to this. When He located him in the garden, God commanded Adam to "work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2: 15). Because Eden was paradise, we may envision the first couple's lounging around and eating grape clusters all day. Genesis, however, tells us the true story. They worked as well as ate; they took care of the garden. The Psalms inspire us to worship our Lord through the manner in which we treat our physical surroundings. Suffering at the hands of their Babylonians captors, the displaced persons of Judah lament in part because of the brutal destruction of the land back home.

God promises again and again to redeem and restore His people. One part of God's covenant with the Children of Israel involved giving them land. Many times when the people disobeyed the His statutes, the Lord punished them by destroying the land. When repentance and restoration came the land was healed. Isaiah beautifully portrays this revitalizing: "The desert and the parched land will be glad, the wilderness will rejoice and blossom" (Isa. 35:1).

At times God uses His creation to instruct us in the ways of redemption. In some measure we should nurture and preserve the environment because of the lessons it teaches us about God. We should remember, though, that we worship the Creator and not the creation; we will then not fall prey to the error of the Romantics.

DICKINSON

Emily Dickinson reflects well the prevailing attitude about God and nature among many Romantics when she writes:

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—
I keep it, staying at Home—
With a Bobolink for a Chorister—
And an Orchard, for a Dome—

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—
I just wear my Wings—

And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton—sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—
I'm going, all along.⁷

Because Emily Dickinson, like Jonathan Edwards, could see God in the natural world, her notions are not blatantly unorthodox. Indeed, the poem even contains a tacit nod to God as Creator. Her communion with nature, however, typifies the growing egocentric culture of the United States which has diminished the role of God. Perhaps the most telling statement of self-aggrandizement is "I just wear my Wings." Apparently Dickinson does not believe that she was "created a little lower than the angels." Like Emerson, she sees herself as "part and particle of God." She also doesn't expect a very strict lesson from God because, after all, His sermons are short!

The changing concepts of man and nature as revealed in the American literary canon become more apparent in two recent movies. The scripts alter older texts to present environmental messages.

Although it was probably popular more because it featured a sometimes scantily clad Daniel Day-Lewis as Nathaniel Poe, *The Last of the Mohicans*, a loose rendering of the James Fenimore Cooper novel of the same title, portrays rather artfully the destruction of the wilderness by civilization. Cooper, the Romantic, might question some of the alterations to his text, but he would be pleased with the underlying message. Cooper's Natty Bumppo (even when the cinema christens him Nathaniel Poe) lives according to nature's laws. He jealously guards the vanishing wilderness and kills wildlife only for food and other necessities. At least once in each of the various Leatherstocking Tales, Natty Bumppo clashes with the agents of the establishment who seek to tame the wilderness. Seldom, however, does the noble savage attribute creation to the work of a sovereign God.

More influential, perhaps, is the popular retelling of the Capt. John Smith history in *Pocahontas*, which features a politically correct Elly May Clampett in the character of the fa-

More influential, perhaps, is the popular retelling of the Capt. John Smith history in Pocahontas, which features a politically correct Elly May Clampett in the character of the famous Indian maiden.

mous Indian maiden. The song "Colors of the Wind" offers, simultaneously, an indictment of settlers who believe that they "owned whatever land they landed on" and a glorification of the "noble savage" who knows the rocks and animals by name.

When fast food establishments turn the title character into an icon by putting images of her and her animal friends on soft drink cups and offering miniatures of them in kiddie-meals, the impact of the movie cannot be overlooked. *Pocahontas* offers a revised view of history which depicts John Smith and the other Anglo-Saxon Protestant settlers of America as destroyers of the land. Unfettered by the shackles imposed by orthodox Christianity, the Native American, on the other hand, prizes and preserves the wilderness.

Surveying literature after Edwards, readers may see the roots of the present-day ecology movement. Both the proponent of the Reformed faith and the proponents of more secularized, egalitarian faiths agree that nature provides inspiration. Sadly, though, the texts reveal that authors progressively de-emphasize or exclude totally the role of God in the physical world. One wonders little, then, why many evangelicals shun conservation efforts which smack of unpopular politics and New-Age "social gospel." The ecology movement aspires to worthy goals, but it is hampered by a wont of common sense and by the removal of God from the landscape. The movement desperately needs participation from the Christian community that can view nature with the eyes of Jonathan Edwards.

ENDNOTES

¹ Jonathan Edwards penned these words in 1740, but they were not actually published until 1765. Jonathan Edwards, *Personal Narrative*, from *American Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. Emory Elliott, et al (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), p. 292.

² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, from *American Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. Emory Elliott, et al (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), p. 1347.

³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Blithedale Romance* (New York: Penguin, 1986), pp. 98-99.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands

of an Angry God," *American Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. Emory Elliott, et al (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991) pp. 302, 305.

⁵ As reference, see two rather different treatments of the subject: Morse Peckham, *Beyond the Tragic Vision: The Quest for Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: George Brazilla, 1962); James Lincoln Collier, *The Rise of Selfishness in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), pp. 327-328.

⁷ Emily Dickinson, "Some Keep the Sabbath," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. Nina Baym, et al (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994) p. 2453.

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This Is My Father's World

Robert P. Glick

No one was surprised that it was summer again. After all, it was that time of year. What came as somewhat of a shock, even for seasoned South Carolinians, was the intensity of the heat and the severity of the drought. There are summers, and then there are summers!

The annual cycle of seasons is both relentlessly predictable yet filled with surprises. Inherent within the constant repetition of seasons, months, and days is the unexpected delight of constant variety. Fall is refreshing after summer; Saturday feels very different from Monday; Friday morning is very different from Friday night. All magnolia trees look alike, but not exactly. Variation and repetition—they are the stuff of nature.¹ They are also the building blocks of music and poetry. Poets and composers use a dynamic rhythm of repetition and variation to create the formal structures of their works. They know that there is a fine line to be walked between the boredom of too much repetition and the unsettling chaos of unbridled variety. It is no wonder that musicians are often great lovers of nature as well. There is a remarkable mutual resonance here, one which the Bible may be affirming when God speaks to Job of when “the morning stars sang together”² or the Psalmist observes that the meadows and valleys “shout for joy and sing.”³

Therefore, it is no surprise to observe the frequency with which hymn writers refer to God’s created order, or, more specifically, to the world of nature. Next to the divine attributes themselves, hymns of praise most frequently call us to thanksgiving for God’s works of creation in the natural order. Further, hymnals are fairly bursting with metaphor and simile using some element or phenomenon of nature to describe the person of God or the Christian life (“Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away...”).⁴ Finally, many other hymns take their cue from Psalm 19, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Here nature is seen as the voice of God, or at least His messenger, pouring forth

speech day after day, leaving humankind more than ample evidence of the Creator.

NATURE EVOKES THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

Praise the Lord!

Praise him, sun and moon,

Praise him, all you shining stars.

Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created
(Psa. 148:1, 3-5).

For the child of God, merely to observe God’s world through the eyes of faith elicits awe-filled praise to its Creator. After all, nature is constantly praising God by simply being what it is. Often, however, we fail to see it, we fail to hear its grand “Hallelujah Chorus.” We can all relate to the experience of walking by the same flower bed we’ve walked by every day, and then one day we seem to notice it for the first time, and are overwhelmed by a tiny flower petal. “How could I have overlooked such a beauty?” we whisper quietly to ourselves. Many of our old familiar hymns have just such epiphanies awaiting us, phrases of deep insight and power we have never quite noticed, never quite heard, although we have sung them for decades.

Consider *For the Beauty of the Earth*. First, we raise grateful praise for earth and skies, hill and vale, tree and flower, sun and moon and stars—all rather straightforward images. Then, suddenly, the writer makes a profound observation by thanking God for ear and eye and the “mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight.” This phrase whizzes by like just one more car in a long train. But what an insight! What a thing for which to give thanks! There is a “mystic harmony” of some sort which takes (links) the raw data we get from ear and eye and makes sense of it. One sense informs and enriches the other. When is the last time you thanked God for something like that?

*Inherent within
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The third stanza of *I Sing the Mighty Power of God* tells us, "...and clouds arise and tempests blow by order from thy throne." The inimitable Isaac Watts drops this cloudburst in the midst of an otherwise fairly "safe" hymn. What! Does Mr. Watts mean to suggest that killer tornadoes and destructive hurricanes are ordained by God? It appears so. And, of course, the *Westminster Confession* would concur.⁵ Though this is not a popular doctrine today, even in many Reformed circles, this hymn is sung regularly in many denominations, seemingly without creating a ripple of concern.

There are times when we get such a sense of who God is, that the best praise we can render is a hushed awe. Nature will often open doors to such encounters. In 1983, Jaroslav Vajda penned this in an attempt to express the inexpressible:

**There are
times when we
get such a
sense of who
God is, that
the best praise
we can render
is a hushed
awe.**

God of the sparrow, God of the whale,
God of the swirling stars,
How does a creature say Awe?
How does a creature say Praise?

God of the rainbow, God of the cross,
God of the empty grave,
How does a creature say Grace?
How does a creature say Thanks?⁶

Our festival of Thanksgiving provides a particularly good opportunity to tie together the ideas of praise and nature. We know well such hymns as *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come* and *We Plow the Fields and Scatter*. A new hymn, written in 1970 by the English hymn writer Fred Pratt Green, artfully and perceptively ties together themes of Providence, social responsibility, thanksgiving for creation's fruits, and the wonders of God's Spirit:

For the fruit of all creation,
thanks be to God.
For the gifts to every nation,
thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor,

God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbor,
God's will is done.
In our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing
In the harvest we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvest of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.⁷

This hymn, entitled *For the Fruit of all Creation*, could be said to flesh out the idea which is so well expressed in the words of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*: "He gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell how great is God Almighty, who has made all things well." Note how the text of *For the Fruit of all Creation* spurs us to notice various aspects of God's gifts to which we have not yet duly responded—the gifts of enjoying the harvest, of experiencing just rewards for labor, of caring for the hungry, of sharing in the harvest of the Spirit. And as if that were not enough, the final line launches all of these considerations to still loftier planes. Love has found us! We are left to ponder for ourselves just how this gift of love infuses all that precedes with even richer meaning.

NATURE AS PARABLE

We are so intimately related with the elements of God's creation that we take them utterly for granted. We gulp God's air by the second, we tread God's soil with every step; we drink God's water, eat his fruit, warm ourselves in his fire, feel his wind, climb his mountains, build with his stones, bask in his sun. We would only be surprised if these things were *not* there. Our language itself, the way we express ourselves, is bound up in our experience of God's world. A quick survey of biblical language suggests that this has always been so. God is a rock,⁸ a sun,⁹ a consuming fire.¹⁰ He is like an eagle.¹¹ "Is not his word like a fire?"¹² "Many

waters cannot quench love."¹³

As is so often the case, it is the Book of Psalms which inspires and models ideal hymnic praise. References to God's created order are hardly lacking in the Psalms. "As pants the hart for water brooks, so pants my soul, O God, for Thee;" "He shall be like a tree that grows set by a river's side;" "...He makes me down to lie in pastures green, He leadeth me the quiet waters by;" "do Thou me lead unto the Rock that higher is than I, Thou hast been a shelter for me."¹⁴

Hymnals are similarly filled with such references. "Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above;"¹⁵ "...whose robe is the light, whose canopy space; his chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form;"¹⁶ "Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea;" "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."¹⁷

Thomas Troeger in 1983 wrote this Pentecost hymn which is showing up in many newer hymnals:

Wind who makes all winds that blow -
gusts that bend the saplings low,
gales that heave the sea in waves,
stirrings in the mind's deep caves -
aim your breath with steady power
on your church, this day, this hour.
Raise, renew the life we've lost,
Spirit God of Pentecost.

Fire who fuels all fires that burn -
suns around which planets turn,
beacons marking reefs and shoals,
shining truth to guide our souls -
come to us as once you came:
burst in tongues of sacred flame!
Light and Power, Might and Strength,
fill your church, its breadth and length.¹⁸

We can't seem to help talking this way. And why should we? Are we not ourselves an integral part of creation, placed in the midst of, and as masters over, the whole of the natural order? Is not all of this a powerful indication of just how closely bound we all are with God, each other, and our world? And is it not an amazing thing that in spite of all this, humankind so often remains so blind? Paul, in speaking to the Athe-

nians observed that, "The God who made the world...made every nation...that they should inhabit the whole earth.... God did this so that men would seek him...though he is not far from each one of us."¹⁹ I grew up on an old hymn, not found in the newer hymnals, which meditates on this line of thought:

God is not far from any one of us:
The wild flower by the wayside speaks his love;
Each blithesome bird bears tidings from above;
Sunshine and shower his tender mercies prove,
And men know not his voice!²⁰

NATURE AMPLIFIES GOD'S VOICE

The preceding hymn serves as excellent transition to our final observation. Scripture tells us that God uses nature as a sort of loud-speaker. We have already referred to Psalm 19 which states this quite explicitly:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

But what, specifically, are the heavens declaring? What is the nature of this speech that is poured forth? Romans 1:20 provides one answer, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made..." Hymns, conceived as they often are by theologically trained minds, can render some worthy expositions of these biblical texts.

Henry van Dyke, in his beloved hymn, *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*, offers the simple yet important reminder that it is not enough merely to rejoice in nature; we are invited to join nature itself in a joyful circle dance around the throne of the Creator of nature:

**References to
God's created
order are
hardly lacking
in the Psalms.**

All thy works with joy surround thee,
Earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in thee.

Nature speaks of God's marvelous providence,
how He has graciously and faithfully met the
needs of his people:

Summer and winter
and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars
in their courses above
Join with all nature
in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness,
mercy and love.²¹

Thy bountiful care,
what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air,
it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills,
it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills
in the dew and the rain.²²

God reminds us that "The earth is the Lord's"²³
and we are to be its faithful stewards:

This is my Father's world,
and to my listening ears
All nature sings and 'round me rings
the music of the spheres.

This hymn goes on to show how there is rest for
those who see God in the things He has made.
God's providence, so clear in nature, invites us
to relax, to lie down beside the still waters:

This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.

If indeed this is our "Father's world," we need
to take seriously the warnings we are receiving

from scientists about the abuse and destruction
of ecological systems. Many Christians have
adopted a cynical attitude regarding environmen-
tal concerns, perhaps due to a tendency to asso-
ciate such issues with the political left or with a
scientific community which is perceived to be
agnostic. But it could only be a lax and irrespon-
sible steward who would ignore even the possi-
bility of serious damage to that which has been
entrusted to him. And when the steward's Mas-
ter is none other than the Creator of the uni-
verse, how can we afford to ignore the warnings?
Christians should, in fact, be among the most
sensitive to environmental concerns, not only
because of our own quality of life, but because
the earth is a gift from our beloved Lord and we
have a mandate to care for it.²⁴

WORSHIP AND ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

This matter of environmental responsibility
impinges on the integrity of our corporate
worship when we consider the words of the
Psalms and of hymns which focus on the natu-
ral world. Where is the integrity in singing *This
Is My Father's World* if one is a manager of an
industry polluting a nearby stream? How can a
fisherman who on Saturday throws empty cans
and candy wrappers into the river sing the next
morning, "*Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
...Thee will I honor?*" Can one sing, "*...all nature
sings and round me rings the music of the spheres*"
when their home is next to a strip mine or their
land is plagued by erosion because too many trees
have been "harvested" from their mountainside?
True worship must always impel us to deeds and
lifestyles that resonate in full integrity with what
we hear God saying and what we know to be
true about God and our relationship with Him.
"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not
do what I say?"²⁵

Some of the special gifts of the recent explo-
sion in new hymn writing are a number of new
hymns which exhort us to environmental re-
sponsibility:

Thank you, God, for water, soil, and air—
large gifts supporting everything that lives.
Forgive our spoiling and abuse of them.
Help us renew the face of the earth.

**Where is the
integrity in
singing "This
Is My Father's
World" if one
is a manager
of an industry
polluting a
nearby
stream?**

Thank you, God, for weaving nature's life
into a seamless robe, a fragile whole.
Forgive our haste, that tampers unawares,
Help us renew the face of the earth.

Thank you, God, for making planet earth
a home for us and ages yet unborn.
Help us to share, consider, save and store.
Come and renew the face of the earth.²⁶

The following hymn, written in 1980 by David
Mehrtens, is not addressed to God, but serves as
a mutual admonition to us all:

The world abounds with God's free grace;
What wonders bless the land!
And on through boundless starry space
God's matchless works expand.

Give thanks for plains and valleys
Spaced by mountains thrusting high;
Give thanks by fighting greed and waste
That drain their treasures dry.

Give thanks in hope, rejoice, repent,
And practice all you prayed;
True thanks can never be content
To foul the world God made.²⁷

Finally, many of these newer hymns allow us to
praise God in ways not thought of by hymn
writers even one generation ago. Recent scien-
tific discoveries astound even us with the vast-
ness of creation—both the vastness of interstel-
lar space and the vastness of the atomic and sub-
atomic world. The more we look, the more we
find. The more we learn, the more we marvel at
the intricacy and profundity of the mind of God
revealed in what He has made.

Lord of the boundless curves of space
and time's deep mystery,
to your creative might we trace all nature's
energy.

Your mind conceived the galaxy,
each atom's secret planned,
and every age of history your purpose,
Lord, has spanned.

Your Spirit gave the living cell
its hidden vital force:
the instincts which all life impel derive
from you, their source.

Lead us, whom love has made and sought,
to find, when planets fall,
that Omega of life and thought where
Christ is all in all.²⁸

ENDNOTES

¹ As used in this article, the word "nature"
is intended to carry no particular philosophi-
cal, theological or scientific agenda. It is used
merely in its generic sense to connote the entire
material universe and its phenomena, as created
by God.

² Job 38:7.

³ Psalm 65:13.

⁴ From *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*.

⁵ *Westminster Confession*, III. 1.

⁶ *God of the Sparrow*, Jaroslav Vajda, 1983.

⁷ *For the Fruit of All Creation*, Fred Pratt
Green (Carol Stream: Hope Pub., 1970).

⁸ Psalm 18:2.

⁹ Psalm 84:11.

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:29.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 32:11.

¹² Jeremiah 23:29

¹³ Song of Solomon 8:7.

¹⁴ *As Pants the Hart* (Psalms 42, 1, 23, 61),
Bible Songs, Standing Committee on Publica-
tions, ARP Church.

¹⁵ *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*, Henry van
Dyke.

¹⁶ *O Worship the King*, Robert Grant.

¹⁷ *My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less*, Edward
Mote.

¹⁸ *Wind Who Makes All Winds*, Thomas
Troeger, 1983.

¹⁹ Acts 17:24-27, selected sections.

²⁰ *God Is Not Far*, Thomas C. Clark, *The
Hymnal of the Evangelical United Brethren
Church*, 1957.

²¹ *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, Thomas Chisolm
(Carol Stream: Hope Pub., 1951).

²² *O Worship the King*, Robert Grant, 1833.

²³ Psalm 24:1.

²⁴ Genesis 2:15.

²⁵ Luke 6:46.

***The more we
learn, the more
we marvel at
the intricacy
and profundity
of the mind of
God revealed
in what He has
made.***

²⁶ *Thank You, God, for Water, Soil and Air*, Brian Wren (Carol Stream: Hope Pub., 1975).

²⁷ *The World Abounds with God's Free Grace*, David G. Mehrtens, 1980.

²⁸ *Lord of the Boundless Curves of Space*, Albert F. Bayly and Brian Wren. Stanzas 1-3 used by permission of Oxford Univ. Press. Stanza 4 (Carol Stream: Hope Pub., 1987).

How *Faith and Practice* Works

Faith and Practice is overseen by an Editorial Committee that works under the authority and oversight of the Board of Publications. Members of the committee read and critique articles, help plan future issues, and oversee the work of the Managing Editor.

The Editorial Committee presently consists of John Ball, John Blumenstein, John Dawson, Bill Evans, Bill Everett, Joel Gillespie (Managing Editor), Jamie Hunt, Ben Johnston *ex officio*, Peter Kemeny, Ray King, Jim Klukow, Clyde McCants (Vice Chairman), David Robinson, Mark Ross (Chairman), Randy Ruble, Kate Stewart *ex officio*, Jeff Weber, and Jack Whytock.

Once the Editorial Committee decides upon an issue topic, articles are solicited through general letters and personal contacts. This eventually involves one or two detailed conversations with a prospective writer about various aspects of the article—content and focus, deadlines, matters of style, copyright, etc. *Faith and Practice* does not remunerate those who write the articles. Theirs is a gift of love to all of you readers. Rather, the journal has what is called "first rights" to the article, which means that the author owns the article and lets *Faith and Practice* have the right to publish the article before anyone else (this of course not being the case with reprinted articles).

Then the author sets to work, and eventually submits a first copy to the Managing Editor for review. All going well, a copy of the article is then sent off to each of four editors, three of whom are members of the Editorial Committee, and one of whom is a member of a team of other volunteer editors who enjoy helping out *Faith and Practice*. These editors use red pens and go to work, making comments about content,

flow of argument, grammar and style, endnotes, etc. They then mail the articles, often with detailed typed summaries of their thoughts, and often with painstakingly written suggestions about how aspects of the article could be reworked, back to the Managing Editor, who sends it all, with some summary observations, back to the writer. Usually there is a subsequent phone call. The writer then considers all of the various editors' notes, and revises the article as he or she thinks best. This revised article is sent back on disk to the Managing Editor, who sends copies off again to one or two copy editors. They go over the articles with a fine toothed comb, and send back marked-up copies to be edited on the computer by the Editor. Sometimes further conversations with the author are needed to clarify points here and there.

Finally the documents are put into the right format and are imported into Pagemaker, the desktop publishing program. Then, after the set-up and lay-out work is done, plain white copies of the final journal are sent again to the copy editors, who check things over. Sometimes, even after all of this, we miss things! Then the disk goes to the printer, which for the first four issues has been Martin Printing in Easley, S.C. After all the copies are printed, we have a bulkmail party at the ARP Center, and the next issue of *Faith and Practice* is on the way!

We are very grateful to the authors of the articles, the staff of the ARP Center, the members of the Editorial Committee, and the following volunteer editors who have each given many hours of their time to help *Faith and Practice* work: Susan Gillespie, Gail Griffin, Mike Montgomery, and Eric Moore. Thank you!

Mourning the Corruption

William D. Marshall

Ten years ago I was in Washington, D.C. and happened upon an art exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. The exhibit featured paintings by Robert Bateman, an artist who creates majestic, large-format images of wild animals in natural landscapes. This particular exhibit was focused on species which are threatened with extinction. As I walked among the paintings I found myself being taken in by the images. Bateman's talents as an artist combined with the sheer size of his paintings, some wall-sized, had the special effect of giving me a sense of being there. The paintings also provoked in me a sense of awe as I considered the beautiful form and sometimes terrifying function of these creatures—terrifying because the exhibit included species such as grizzly bears, orca whales, and Siberian tigers. As I looked upon the paintings a sense of sadness welled-up within me and tears came to my eyes. I remember thinking of what the world would be like without these great creatures. Each one had been designed by God, and even in their strength and brutality, they bore witness to the grandeur and wisdom of their Creator.

Several years later, I arrived at my home after a day at the office to find the latest issue of *National Geographic* in my mailbox. Thumbing through the magazine I came upon an article that described the sharp decline of African elephants resulting from increased poaching for ivory. Photographs portrayed slaughter. Aerial views showed dozens of rotting elephant carcasses scattered among an area that had been the site of an ambush. Other images included mountains of ivory tusks, confiscated from the poachers. As I sat down in a chair, I began to weep, and in sadness I turned my thoughts and emotions to God. I remember expressing these sentiments: "We are so utterly lost and perverted. We continue to devour and destroy Your wonderful creation. How long will creation continue suffering and groaning at the hands of mankind with its disease of sin and death? God, please bring this to an end."

Looking back on these two episodes in my

life, I believe that I was mourning before God. I was mourning the loss of Eden, a loss of harmony with God and nature, and I was mourning the wretchedness of man, myself included.

The reason I share these personal feelings is that I wonder, are there other Christians who have similar experiences as they relate to God's creation, or am I just a little too emotional? What should be our response to mankind's desecration of the creative work of our God? What should be our response to the greed, haste, and irresponsibility of man that leads to the loss of an acre of forest every second; the extinction of entire species of plants, insects, and animals; the industrialized suffering of animals for the mass production of consumer products; and the slaughter of elephants for their ivory? Do we, as Christians, assume that we have to keep busy with other more important issues? While a number of Christian writers observe that we have neglected our duty in caring for the earth, conservative evangelical Christians generally are characterized as not caring about the beauty of nature and not caring about nature itself.

Throughout the Bible, God reveals that mankind has been given responsibility as stewards. Ever since Adam was charged to tend and keep the garden, we have had the responsibility to be caretakers of what God has created (Gen. 1:27-31, 2:15). How will we respond when the Master asks, "What have you done with the animals I entrusted to you and how have you enhanced the tapestry of my creation?"

MY CALLING, MY JOB

I suppose my emotions are hooked to the convictions that underlie my sense of God's calling for me to work vocationally in the field of environmental stewardship. Since the seventh grade, I have had a growing interest in natural places, places that offer the beauty and wonder of creation and the adventure of discovering and experiencing it. As a boy I was regularly exposed to nature through family camping trips and hunting excursions and, when I was older,

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through backpacking and whitewater paddling adventures with friends. An important experience during my high school years involved me, two of my brothers, and several friends within our church youth group in a local campaign to preserve an old-growth forest just south of Columbia. That campaign eventually led to the establishment of the Congaree Swamp National Monument. Impressions from these experiences of youth were used by God to form in my heart a sense of calling to full-time environmental stewardship, or creation-care work. However, the exact path to which He has been calling me has been obscured from time to time.

As I moved through undergraduate college years, I encountered a continual struggle to discern what God wanted me to do vocationally. I remember many earnest prayers asking God to direct my steps because my vision was frustratingly clouded. God led me into the interdisciplinary field of geography for my undergraduate education and then on to a masters degree in environmental science. In hindsight, I can see God's wise and gracious hand on my journey. The place God sent me for my first job out of college, the South Carolina Governor's Office, Division of Natural Resources and the Environment, provided quite an "ivory tower" experience. I worked in the Governor's Office for nearly five years. The knowledge and experience gained there was tremendous, giving me a much greater understanding of environmental public policy issues. But it also gave me a thirst for more hands-on problem-solving work that could actually address some of those issues. With that, God led me to my current place within the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

I am an environmental planner for the Department of Natural Resources. I manage projects within our river and watershed conservation section, which consists of six people with backgrounds in the natural and social sciences. The mission of our group is to bring about better stewardship of rivers and watersheds through the state scenic rivers program, through river corridor and watershed planning projects, and through public outreach and education programs. When I started this job, I was hired to work on a research and demonstration project that involved creating a new planning process to guide local land use and development decisions.

The Edisto River Basin, a 3,120 square mile watershed in South Carolina, was the area selected for implementing the project. The team with which I worked had the opportunity to consult with experts from around the country and we were able to design an ambitious and comprehensive planning process. After we developed the proposal and were able to convince our bosses that it would work, we set out to test the process in the real world, among real people in the Edisto River Basin. After several years of hard work—directly involving nearly 200 people—we completed our planning process with success.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

The work we accomplished in the Edisto River Basin Project is representative of what we are now doing within most of our projects. It involves non-regulatory, collaborative conservation efforts within local communities. First, we analyze and assess the ecological and socioeconomic conditions of the project area and publish our findings. Then we establish a local citizen-based task force representing community leaders and all relevant interests in the project area. This task force guides the project and makes policy and management recommendations, overseeing studies of the area to evaluate the ecological, economic, and cultural resource base and to identify related problems and opportunities. Finally, policy and management recommendations are created for the purpose of guiding local decision-making which will affect land use and development in the river corridor or watershed. Once all the work is completed, we compile our findings, maps, and recommendations and publish a stewardship plan. From this point forward, the true test of our planning effort begins. Creating a plan is relatively straightforward; it requires thinking about changes. However, implementing a plan is complex and challenging; it requires making changes. Will the plan be followed? Will it effect change and bring about better environmental stewardship? Will it benefit the community? These are tough questions. To address them we have been developing education and outreach strategies for our planning efforts and trying to keep our citizen-based task force groups intact and motivated to be advocates for the resource and for their stewardship

plans.

STEWARDSHIP AND LOVE

The Biblical concept of stewardship and the commands to love God and to love our neighbor help to define the responsibilities Christians have to care for the earth and to manage its resources wisely. We read in Genesis that man was given dominion over the earth to rule over its creatures (Gen. 1:28) and that God placed him in the garden to work it and to take care of it (Gen. 2:15). Later, the Bible affirms the practice of individuals possessing and having legal rights to land and deriving a livelihood from it (Num. 35:3-4, Deut. 19:14, Lev. 25:1-6). All of this, however, falls before the backdrop of one overarching truth, that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psa. 24:1-2; Lev. 25:23). Therefore, in reality, *we* do not own anything; we only manage the things of the earth and use them for a while as God's servants and stewards. In His parable of the talents (Mat. 25:14-30), Jesus gives an example of what is expected of us as stewards. The parable suggests that we are to take what God has provided, be faithful to care for it, and be creative in enabling it to produce more. In the parable, the steward judged to be wicked and lazy failed to increase his talents and consequently was cast into the outer darkness. How might this parable apply to our stewardship of the earth?

On the sobering side, it strikes me that the Master will be displeased with stewardship that renders the land less productive and less beautiful than it was when He gave it to us. He will be very displeased with stewardship that carelessly allows the extinction of species to occur or causes the land and water to be spoiled by toxic chemicals.

On the exciting and challenging side, it is intriguing for me to consider how human beings, created in God's image and redeemed by Christ, could creatively apply their gifts and talents to increase the beauty and bounty of God's creation. What marvelous effects the saints could have on the groanings of creation if they were committed to creation-care and applied their God-given dominion over the earth through the arts, sciences, and technologies of architecture, agriculture, engineering, ecology, medicine,

chemistry, sculpture and other vocations and disciplines. As Christian earth-keepers, putting their beliefs and skills into practice and opposing abuses of nature, they could bring about what Francis Schaeffer referred to as a "substantial healing" between man and nature.¹ The potential fruits from this healing would include the following: a new restoration and cultivation of nature resulting in increased beauty and concern for aesthetics, improvements in public health, higher-quality human development, an enhanced economy, and increased land values. The watching world would be attracted to this healing and perhaps see the Spirit of God within it and come to know Christ.

Jesus gave us the great commandments to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Loving God certainly requires that we respect and care for what He has created because God cares for His creation. Genesis 1:31 says "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." Romans reveals that God's plan of salvation extends to all of nature, for "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). It seems to me that Christians, above all others, have the greatest reasons to be caring for the earth and its creatures—we do so out of love and respect for God. After all, the world is our Heavenly Father's artistic and loving expression and He has given us orders to look after it.

DOWNSTREAM IN TIME

The commandment that we love our neighbor requires that we consider how our actions will affect other people. We must consider how our burning, dumping, spraying, clearing, or building will impact folks downstream, downwind, or within view of us. And we must also remember those downstream from us in time—our stewardship of the earth directly affects the generations that will follow us. When you go to the park or fish on the river, consider the simple rule: "Take only pictures and leave only footprints." The burger wrappers we leave behind and the flowers we take home with us

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will lessen the enjoyment of others who come after us. All of our choices have consequences and many will affect other people. We must ask ourselves, "Will I love others and be considerate of them or will I be self-serving and just do what suits me?"

ROUNDING OUT THE MESSAGE

People experience spiritual brokenness on three levels. First, there is our alienation from God. We wonder, "Is there really a God, and if so, what am I to him?" Second, there is separation and disharmony among men as a result of selfishness, envy, and hatred. And third, there is separation between human beings and the rest of creation, as demonstrated by our destruction of nature and its beauty. On the first and second levels the Church is actively ministering to people and proclaiming the truths and ethics of the Bible. On the third level, however, we seem to have little to say. In 1933 the well-known conservationist, Aldo Leopold, said:

There is yet no ethic dealing with man's relation with the land and the animals and plants which grow upon it....The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but no obligations.²

Today people are continuing to search for a land ethic, and for many the search is spiritual. I think many people, like me, who have found themselves mourning the corruption of God's world, are looking for a deeper understanding of nature's place in eternity. The Church needs to draw out, define, and make known the Biblical ethics that define a right relationship between mankind and nature. Christians need to understand their responsibilities to care for the beauty and bounty of the earth. The whole world needs to hear how God's plan of salvation extends not only to people but to all of creation. This fuller accounting of the gospel will surely give more glory to God, because it will more accurately reflect His own character as the one who lovingly sustains the world which He has made. The result could well be that more sinners will be drawn to God, especially from among those who have felt great sorrow for the devastation of the earth.

ENDNOTES

¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), pp. 65-77.

² Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1966), p. 238.

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Haydn's *The Creation*

Barton Swaim

The history of music is filled with stories, some of them pretty strange, of musical inspiration. Berlioz wrote the *Symphonie fantastique* after seeing an Irish actress, whom he would not meet for several years, play the younger female roles in *Hamlet*. Stravinsky wrote the *Symphony of Psalms* after his abscessed right forefinger, just before a piano recital, was miraculously healed.

Somewhere high on the list of musical stimulants, however, is nature. But the composer is faced with a problem: How do you suggest nature through music? Do you imitate the sounds of springtime, or must you be satisfied with titling your work, as Schumann titled his first symphony, *Spring*?

Some have chosen the former, which musicologists call "program music," and some the latter, which they call "absolute music." Program music" (so called, originally, because descriptive titles were provided with the "programs" at performances) attempts to imitate the sounds of the thing evoked—the rushing of a river, the falling of snow. Not until the nineteenth century did composers try much program music, and so the natural world has been fairly neglected by the Western tradition until relatively recently.

Not entirely, however. We all know Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the first four violin concertos of a set of twelve, originally accompanied by four sonnets describing the seasons. As I write, Christmas approaches, and "Winter" plays in many a shopping mall. (Depending on one's perspective, this may be a good thing or a bad thing.)

When the nineteenth century did come, the orchestra got bigger and Romanticism, having already arisen in literature, turned the composer's mind toward nature. One of the earliest (and no doubt one of the greatest) symphonic depictions of nature is Beethoven's sixth symphony, the *Pastoral*. Beethoven's love of nature is well-attested: in Vienna, the story goes,

he once refused to stay in a house because there were no trees in sight. Though one wouldn't call this symphony "program music" (which seems a little pejorative, doesn't it?), Beethoven's ability to "paint a picture," especially for a composer writing in 1807-08, is remarkable. The composer himself named the five movements of *The Pastoral* in the program notes:

Awakening of Cheerful Feelings upon Arriving in the Country
Scene by the Brook
Merry Gathering of Country Folk
Thunderstorm
Shepherd's Song—Happy and Thankful Feelings After the Storm

The visual representation is all very well; what astonishes us, however, is that the entire symphony is beautifully melodic. Without the program notes, this music would still take its place in the canon. Even the *Thunderstorm*, though the notes convey a thunderstorm precisely, is beautiful music. Wagner gave us quite a thunderstorm in the prelude to *Die Walküre*, but, whatever it was, it wasn't beautiful. The *Pastoral* gives us nature—and nature's beauty.

As the twentieth century approached, composers became even more ambitious. Orchestras got larger, and, especially in the medium of the "tone-poem," music began to depict all manner of things, including, of course, nature. Richard Strauss's last great tone-poem, the *Alpine Symphony*, evokes the changing moods of an alpine mountain in nearly an hour of unbroken music. The score calls for an orchestra the size of a small country—four wind sections, twenty horns, an organ, a bloated string section, two harps and the symphonic equivalent of the kitchen sink, a wind machine.

Even our own age has offered up some admirable tributes to nature. The United States has produced a talented composer known primarily

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for his nature-inspired music. Alan Hovhaness is responsible for a good number of symphonies, many with such program titles as *Mysterious Mountain* (No. 2), *Mt. St. Helens* (No. 50), and *To the Green Mountains* (No. 46)—as indeed one would expect from a Seattle pantheist.

But often, nature-inspired music, especially in the nineteenth century, made no "programmatic" attempts to portray nature in mimetic sounds. A few pieces, Antonin Dvorak's overture *In Nature's Realm* among them, consist more or less completely of "absolute" music. The term "absolute" refers to music with no extra-musical references: non-program music, in other words, or "music for its own sake." Accordingly, Schumann's *Spring* symphony, though without chirping birds or whatever it is one hears at springtime, manages to conjure up that season in a thrilling way.

To put it simply, Haydn possesses the ability to assemble notes in such a way that, when we hear them played, we smile.

THE CREATION

Surely, however, the greatest musical praise of nature was not merely a praise of "nature," but a praise of Creation.

Franz Joseph Haydn's greatest oratorio, *The Creation*, contains texts from Genesis, the Psalms, and (in a reworked fashion) Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The distinction between program and absolute music had not come about in the late-eighteenth century, and this work, like the *Pastoral* symphony, falls somewhere in between.

The first bars depict "Chaos." From the moment chaos ends with a brilliant C major from the strings, and the pronouncement of the chorus, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was LIGHT," we are treated to a ravishing drama of God's creative activities. Among the many aspects of Haydn's creative genius to emerge in this work—one that has not been equalled, so far as I can tell, in music history—is his power to *delight*. To put it simply, Haydn possesses the ability to assemble notes in such a way that, when we hear them played, we *smile*.

Time and again in *The Creation*—and the drama does not concern the Fall—we find ourselves cracking a smile. Often this occurs by means of musical "jokes." The angel Raphael (the bass), describing the living creatures bursting onto the scene (the tiger, the stag, insects), finishes with the words, sung exceedingly slow:

In long dimensions creeps
with sinuous trace, the worm.

If you've ever heard the words "the worm" oozed out by a strong bass, you will know what I mean. (Haydn pulls the same trick in Symphony No. 93, in which, near the end of the slow movement, the music stops and a solo bassoon cuts a note so rude that audiences often laugh out loud.)

The theological key to the whole work is the creation of Adam and Eve. Midway through Part II, Raphael, singing of the marvels of God's works, wonders what is missing:

But all the work was not complete.
There wanted yet that wondrous being,
that grateful should God's power admire,
with heart and voice His goodness praise.

Straightway Uriel answers:

And God created man in His own image....

Donald Tovey was quite right, in his great essay on this work, to comment simply: "Or, as the first answer in the Shorter Catechism has it, 'Q. What is the chief end of man? A. To glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.'"

This is delightful music, and nature has never been more gloriously served. Haydn would write another oratorio, *The Seasons*, depicting life after the Fall. In this second work, he again creates the joy-in-music of *The Creation*, though with a weaker libretto (or text). The composer himself resented having to write music to such words as "Long live wine! Long live the cask in which it's kept!"; and he thought it silly that critics praised the work for musical imitations of frogs and sheep. Again, Tovey: "It is an automatic function of his sense of humor, which, as is now proverbially known, was never so irrepressible as when he rejoiced in the goodness of God."

These compositions, *The Seasons* and *The Creation*, especially *The Creation*, stand as beautiful and fascinating musical tributes to the created world.

Nature, as the textbooks tell us, has always been a stimulant to Western artists, in music as

in art and literature. I have often wondered why the Reformed tradition isn't better represented in Western art, especially music, and whether the answer doesn't have something to do with this idea of nature as an artistic stimulant.

MUSIC AND THE REFORMED TRADITION

Why, for example, does one look in vain for any noteworthy composer out of the Reformed tradition? The Lutherans gave us Bach and Mendelssohn; the Roman Catholics gave us Byrd, Haydn, Dvorak, Elgar, Mahler and a host of others; and the Anglicans and the Eastern Orthodox, especially during this century, have produced a fair list of names. Although there are some noteworthy exceptions in other fields—a few Britons in literature, the Dutch tradition in painting—they remain exceptions. The fact is—and I do not call it a tragedy, for art is not a moral obligation—the fact is, I say, that Reformed Christians have stayed more or less out of Western art.

Various writers, some of them unsympathetic to Reformed theology, have ventured reasons for this. Some have contended that “sacramental” traditions—or, if I may over-simplify the matter, theological traditions that hold to a more “literal” view of Christ’s presence at the Lord’s Supper—view creation as good (“sacramental”), and therefore worthy of imitation and artistic reworking. This argument is fairly ill-witted, among other reasons because Reformed theology has from its origins embraced—not merely accepted, but *embraced*—the goodness of nature, as anyone who has read (e.g.) Calvin’s *Institutes* and his commentaries knows. Another reason alleged to explain our absence from Western art is the Zwinglian interpretation of the regulative principle, viz. that musical instruments (in Zwingli’s case, the organ in the Great Minster of Zurich) have no place in Christian worship. No doubt that idea hasn’t helped matters, but a) it does not explain our aversion to literature and visual art, and b) most of the Reformed tradition has dissented from the Zwinglian position.

In any case, I wonder if our shyness isn’t due, at least in part, to how we normally think of and understand artistic “inspiration”—the

poet writing about a bluebird or a snowcapped mountain, the composer putting to music his impression of a starry night or a waterfall, the painter rendering his glimpse of a sunset or a herd of antelopes. Much great art however, perhaps most of it, has been inspired by other sorts of things entirely (wars, powerful stories) or by nothing noble or significant at all (the need for money and commissions); but I suspect that were it not for the natural beauty around us, without which human ideas of beauty could scarcely be articulated, not many works of art would be produced at all. If there were no sunsets or oceans or starry skies, who would have thought to write poems or songs? All of which is to say that those of us who aren’t artists think of artistic inspiration, perhaps simplistically but with some justification, as something necessarily occurring between the artist and some beautiful natural phenomenon.

This is the point: Reformed Christians, owing to their sense of living all of life in the presence of God, think of artistic “inspiration” as something moved and motivated by sentiments which are “secular,” that is, sentiments which are or seem disconnected from devotion to Christ. And a great deal of artistic inspiration has been this way. When Strauss got the idea of writing a symphonic poem about the alpine landscape, it was not, I feel fairly certain, out of devotion to Christ; it was out of awe of the alpine landscape.

The question is really not, Why are there so few Reformed artists? The question is, Why are there so many Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox artists? The answer, I believe—and it is not a statement I relish making—is that Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox theologies, in various ways and to varying degrees, allow the believer to separate artistic “inspiration” from religious devotion.¹ The Reformed Christian cannot make that separation; the Calvinist, as Abraham Kuyper contended in his famous *Lectures on Calvinism*, tries very hard to view all of life consciously in relation to the Divine Presence.² So when the Reformed Christian sees a full moon, he writes a hymn, not a piano sonata; when he sees a nightingale, he writes a prayer to God, not an ode to the nightingale.

Whether specific doctrines from those theological traditions may take the blame for this

I have often wondered why the Reformed tradition isn't better represented in Western art, especially music.

In short, we do not have to separate artistic inspiration—which comes first and naturally from the realm of nature, but also from other parts of the created order—from religious devotion.

dichotomy (and I believe they may) is an excellent topic for another essay. With the exception of J. S. Bach's, one need only read the biographies of famous composers from those traditions to discover that, however devout they may have been, artistic inspiration was, for them, not rooted firmly in religious devotion.

Although this may seem a convenient way to excuse the Reformed tradition's deficiencies in artistic endeavors, it does not absolve us of guilt. The task is not to separate the sunset from the sunset's Creator, as non-Reformed theologies more easily permit their adherents to do, even if that separation has often produced great art. The task, I say, is to express religious sentiment, not always in explicitly devotional material, but in serious art, which is primarily, though not always, non-sectarian in content.³

Put otherwise, instead of writing a hymn every time he is struck by the creation's or the Creator's majesty, the Reformed Christian ought to express that devotion in some other form—say, a sonata for violin and piano, or, if the awe-inspiring object happens to be a stormy sea, a sonnet about a stormy sea. If he would rather write a hymn than a sonata, we ought not harass him for it; the enjoyment and creation of serious art, contemporary platitudes notwithstanding, is not a moral imperative; but it *would* be nice, sometimes, if he would just write the sonata. Why? One reason is that *unbelievers* will enjoy the sonata (assuming it has merit). Another is that the sonata—along with the opera, the play, the novel and the sonnet—represents artistic media which reveal different aspects of the creation's beauty. The hymn and the prayer also reveal many elements of creation's beauty, but they do not *exhaust* it.

The natural world, of course, has not always been the source of inspiration for artists. But one's impressions of the natural world does often shape one's aesthetic sensibilities (we know what "beauty" means because we've seen a forest during the fall season), and, anyhow, as Christians we believe, with David, that the heavens declare God's handiwork.

In short, we do not have to separate artistic inspiration—which comes first from the realm of nature, but also from other parts of the created order—from religious devotion. Though it may sound irreverent, the comic opera is quite

as worthy as the hymn, and a painting of a peasant is quite as worthy as a painting of the apostle Paul.

ENDNOTES

¹ J. S. Bach is one unambiguous exception.

² Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931 [reprinted 1994]).

³ W. H. Auden, an Anglican, held that art is *always* non-sectarian in content. This, I think, reflects the natural dichotomy of non-Reformed Christian artists. See "Postscript: Christianity & Art," in *The Dyer's Hand* (New York: Vintage, 1989), pp. 456-461.

An Environmental Legacy

Dwight E. Thomas

It all began on December 26, 1966, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It was here, in Washington, DC, that Professor Lynn White, Jr. delivered the keynote address—an address that over the next several years was to awaken the Christian church and Christian theologians to the emerging environmental movement.

In reality, the address was more an attack than a wake-up call, for Professor White placed the blame for the ecological woes, just then beginning to be understood, squarely on the doorstep of Christianity. White, Professor of History at the University of California at Los Angeles, was a distinguished medieval historian, and had previously been President of Mills College. Allegations from someone with such credentials did not go unnoticed. The text of Dr. White's speech was published at least four times over the next year, including the March 10, 1967 issue of *Science* magazine.

POLLUTION AND THE DEATH OF MAN

It was the *Science* magazine article that somehow found its way into the hands of Dr. Francis Schaeffer, then living in Huemoz, Switzerland. Dr. Schaeffer with his wife Edith had founded L'Abri Fellowship some 12-15 years earlier in the Swiss village of Huemoz, and Dr. Schaeffer had become well known as a Christian philosopher-theologian. According to Udo Middlemann, Dr. Schaeffer's son-in-law, it was commonplace for people to send Dr. Schaeffer items of interest such as the White article for comment and reaction.

Dr. Schaeffer believed that it was imperative to listen to and understand the ideas of one's culture, so that, among other things, one could better respond to the threat, if any, that they might pose. He was quite adept at seeing how ideas progressed through art, music, literature, and science, until they were finally entrenched into the fabric of culture. This combination of philosophical and theological reflection exem-

plified one of the primary teaching emphases of L'Abri—that Christianity is true and speaks to all of life, not just to some narrow religious sphere. Therefore, it is appropriate to develop a Christian perspective on the arts, politics, the social sciences, and even ecology.

Dr. Schaeffer took seriously the various letters, articles, and clippings sent his way, pondering and discussing items of interest with students and colleagues. Eventually he would develop some of his ideas into lectures, which would be given to the students at L'Abri, prompting, of course, still more discussion of the ideas. Ultimately, many of the lectures would be presented at colleges, universities, and other forums. Some found their way into print.

Schaeffer's *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*, published in 1970 by Tyndale House, came about as a response to the ideas raised by Dr. White and a subsequent article by Dr. Richard Means (Associate Professor of Social Sciences at Kalamazoo College), "Why Worry About Nature?" published in the December 2, 1967 issue of *Saturday Review*, an article which itself had been triggered by Dr. White's previous article.

Pollution and the Death of Man went through eleven printings by Tyndale House Publishers between 1970 and 1980, and in 1992 was republished by Crossway Books. The Crossway edition included a new concluding chapter by Udo Middlemann. Thus, this work has remained in print for over 25 years, and is widely viewed not only as a landmark book from the early days of the environmental movement, but as a still-relevant foundational study on the subject of environmental stewardship.

This article will first examine the points raised by Drs. White and Means, then provide a summary of Dr. Schaeffer's response, and finally try to assess the lasting impact of *Pollution and the Death of Man*.

First, however, it would be helpful to see Dr. Schaeffer's work in the context of the budding environmental movement. In 1967, the year Professor White gave his speech, there were two ar-

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ticles cited under the "ecology" heading in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* (one was Dr. White's article). In 1970 there were forty such articles. More importantly, by 1970 there were 123 articles under a heading "environmental movement," and five entries under "religion and ecology," both of which headings had appeared for the first time that year. The first Earth Day, covered extensively by every popular magazine of the time, was in April of 1970.

So by the time *Pollution and the Death of Man* appeared in 1970, the word "ecology" had moved from the science textbook to the front page. The new environmental movement had been born, and the environment had achieved equal status with race, poverty, and the Vietnam war as an emotional and political issue.¹ Thousands of activists had spawned many new advocacy groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Policy Institute, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, which now joined forces with the old-line conservation and wilderness preservation organizations.² A flurry of federal legislative activity followed—the National Environmental Policy Act (1970), the Clean Air Act (1970), the Clean Water Act (1972), the Endangered Species Act (1973), and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (1972)—as activists looked to the federal government to solve environmental problems.³ Thus, between the time that Drs. White and Means wrote and Dr. Schaeffer responded with his book, the environmental movement had become a powerful cultural force.

DR. WHITE'S SALVO

Let's now examine the major points put forth by Dr. White.

1. *Science and technology alone cannot solve our ecological problems.*

White argues that the merger of technology and science is a major contributor to our modern ecological woes.

....it was not until four generations ago that Western Europe and North America arranged a marriage between science and technology, a union of the theoretical and

the empirical approaches to our natural environment. The emergence...of technological power over nature can scarcely be dated before 1850...its acceptance...may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture. Almost at once the new situation forced the crystallization of the novel concept of ecology; indeed, the word *ecology* first appeared in the English language in 1873.⁴

White further argues that modern science is at least partially a realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of and rightful mastery over nature, and hence is rooted in Christianity:

...in the Latin West by the early thirteenth century natural theology was following a very definite bent. It was ceasing to be a decoding of the physical symbols of God's communication with man and was becoming the effort to understand God's mind by discovering how His creation operates....From the thirteenth century, up to and including Leibnitz and Newton, every major scientist, in effect, explained his motivations in religious terms...(so) modern Western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology.⁵

2. *Our ecological response depends upon our ideas about the man-nature relationship.*

What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things about them.⁶ We are deeply conditioned by our views of our nature and our destiny. The value of cows in India, for example, is far different from their value in the West because of the difference between Hindu and Christian dogmas. In pre-Christian cultures, every tree, stream, and hill had its guardian spirit. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or built a dam, it was important to satisfy the spirits in charge of those places.

3. *The Judeo-Christian worldview is part of the ecological problem.*

White points out that the replacement of pagan-

ism by Christianity has ingrained a new attitude towards nature within us:

The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture....Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology.⁷

Then, without directly quoting Genesis, White tells the creation story, his cynicism evident in several places:

By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve, to keep the man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.⁸

White goes on to strengthen his point through contrasting the dualism of Christianity with other worldviews:

Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions...not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.⁹

His point, of course, is that by destroying pagan animism, Christianity has allowed the exploitation of nature. The "spirits" which were thought to abide in natural objects had previously protected nature from man; these were now gone with Christianity, and so was gone the protection of nature.

4. *Man must find a new religion or rethink our*

Christianity to get out of the current ecological crisis.

White goes on to propose that the new patron saint for modern ecologists ought to be St. Francis of Assisi. White sees Francis as eliminating the man-nature dualism of orthodox Christianity by making all creatures equal:

The key to an understanding of Francis is his belief in the virtue of humility...not merely for the individual but for man as a species. Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all of God's creatures...Brother Ant and Sister Fire, praising the Creator in their own ways as Brother Man does in his....St. Francis proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man's relation to it: he tried to substitute the idea of equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man's limitless rule of creation.¹⁰

ENTER DR. MEANS

We will now briefly identify the major arguments put forth by Dr. Means in his March 10, 1967 article, "Why Worry About Nature?":

1. *Man's relation to nature is a moral, not just a scientific relation.*

What, then, is the moral crisis? It is, I think, a pragmatic problem—that is, it involves the actual social consequences of myriad and unconnected acts. The crisis comes from the combined results of our mistreatment of our environment. It involves the negligence of a small businessman on the Kalamazoo River, the irresponsibility of a large corporation on Lake Erie, the impatient use of insecticides by a farmer in California, the stripping of land by Kentucky mine operators...the passenger pigeon (extinct)...the whale (potential extinction)...the damming of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon (loss of beauty and wildlife)...such activities are immoral. We could lengthen the list, but it should

His point, of course, is that by destroying pagan animism, Christianity has allowed the exploitation of nature.

Dr. Schaeffer is well aware that his audience is mostly Christian. He knows he must convince his readers that the environmental issue is real.

be clear that destruction of nature by man's "busyness" and technological arrogance is the result of a thoughtless and mindless human activity.¹¹

2. *There is real and growing biological pollution of the environment.*

His point here is that this isn't just some counter-cultural scare but is real—and something must be done to stop it.

3. *Christianity is not the answer.*

No new points are made here by Dr. Means.

4. *Pantheism is the answer.*

Dr. Means carefully avoids the use of the word "pantheism" but he clearly proposes it:

...there may be a "sound instinct" involved in the fact that some of these so-called beat(niks) have turned to Zen Buddhism. It may represent an overdue perception of the fact that we need to appreciate more fully the religious and moral dimensions of the relation between nature and the human spirit....It seems to me...fruitful to think of nature as part of a system of human organization—as a variable, a changing condition—which interacts with man and culture. If nature is so perceived, then a love, a sense of awe, and a feeling of empathy with nature need not degenerate into a subjective, emotional bid for romantic individualism.¹²

Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor of Old Testament at Eden Theological Seminary offered this response to Dr. Means in a 1969 article:

Richard L. Means suggests that nature is profitably thought of "as part of a system of human organization"....(But) the idea that man will learn to have a new regard for the (nature) he has learned to control so well strikes one as rather romantically optimistic....Moreover, the gain of biblical faith is that it has emancipated man from nature, given him an existence of his own, apart from and over against his environ-

ment. We must take care lest we forfeit that gain in a return to the notion of man as a part of nature. For it is a great gain—how great is evident when we consider the food problem that afflicts India because of man's enslavement to nature.¹³

Dr. Brueggemann then goes on to explore the meaning of Genesis 1:28, concluding that "to subdue and have dominion" is not a reason for abuse, but rather a command to order, maintain, protect, and care for, i.e., to exercise control in the best interest of nature. He argues that Genesis 1:28 frees man, sets him over nature, and makes man responsible for what has been entrusted to him. Nothing in this verse supports the contention that it authorizes man to act in ways that create the current ecological crisis.¹⁴

DR. SCHAEFFER'S RESPONSE

In the new Crossway edition of *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Middleman, in his added chapter, provides some personal insights about Dr. Schaeffer that might be helpful at this point. After Dr. Schaeffer moved to Europe, he never again owned a car, he objected to waste being thrown overboard when he crossed the Atlantic by boat, he rested and exercised by hiking in the Swiss Alps, (often stooping to pick up trash left by others), and he loved to garden.¹⁵ But he was not a fanatic who objected to modern technology. He opposed environmental "programs" for nature when the value and needs of individuals living today were denied. He was also not an idealist, being as he was intensely sensitive to the reality of having to live in a fallen world.¹⁶ Let's look at the points he makes:

1. *The ecological crisis we face is real.*

Dr. Schaeffer is well aware that his audience is mostly Christian. Tyndale House does not place many books on the New York Times best seller list. He knows he must convince his readers that the environmental issue is real. The issues of air pollution, water pollution, and the extinction of species due to the use of DDT are not just some leftist propaganda, invented to expand the government bureaucracy. He cites the work undertaken to save the cahow bird in Bermuda from

extinction due to the pollution of the ocean by DDT. He then generalizes as follows:

The simple fact is that if man is not able to solve his ecological problems, then man's resources are going to die. It is quite conceivable that man will be unable to fish the oceans as in the past, and that if the balance of the oceans is changed too much, man will find himself without enough oxygen to breathe. So the whole problem of ecology is dumped into this generation's lap....we have been reading and hearing of this on every side from all over the world.¹⁷

Dr. Schaeffer goes on to express regret and sadness over how this crisis will affect the quality of life on earth if not checked.

I believe that we are seeing today a loss of joy in our total culture. The death of "joy" in nature is leading to the death of nature itself.¹⁸

2. *Men do what they think, so their worldview is important.*

The ideological basis of man's thoughts in the area of ecology is critical. On this point, Dr. Schaeffer agrees with Dr. White:

Lynn White understood the need of a base in the area of ecology. To quote him: "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about nature and our destiny—that is, by religion." Here I believe he is completely right. Men *do* what they *think*. Whatever their worldview is, this is the thing which will spill over into the external world. This is true in every area, in sociology, in psychology, in science and technology, as well as in the area of ecology.¹⁹

Although Dr. Schaeffer agreed with Dr. White that one's worldview ultimately determined one's outlook and behavior with respect to the environment, he of course disagreed with the accusation that Christianity as a worldview was

responsible for the current ecological crisis. Indeed, he knew that left unanswered this notion would simply spread unchecked through the cultural thought processes and eventually become "common knowledge," even if it were false. And so Dr. Scaeffler goes on to deal with the issue of worldview.

3. *Pantheism is not the answer.*

Simplistically stated, pantheism is the view that *everything* is included in that which is God, this "everything" including both "nature" and "man." On the basis of the pantheistic worldview, Drs. White and Means see man's relation to nature as moral, and, therefore, man's abuse of nature as immoral. By acting improperly against God's creation, man is acting improperly, immorally, against God Himself. But Dr. Schaeffer rejects the use of the term "God's creation" by Dr. Means as being inconsistent with his pantheistic argument:

The term "God's creation" has no real place in pantheistic thinking. One simply does not have a *creation* (in pantheism), but only an extension of God's essence.²⁰

Schaeffer also objects to this pantheism-rooted moral argument by showing that it eventually degenerates into a practical and pragmatic argument, since Pantheism ultimately provides no moral base, no moral absolute by which to judge the behavior of that which is part of "God." With no real base for morals, one is left with manipulation, using religious words to motivate people to treat nature better.

Edmund Leach, the Cambridge anthropologist,...chose a certain scientific solution, not because it had anything to do with objective science, but very clearly because it led to the sociological answer he wanted.... Richard Means...was also using science and religion for purely sociological ends. With it, science dies, religion dies, and all you have left is sociological manipulation.²¹

Dr. Schaeffer contends that pantheism in any form is not a sufficient answer to the ecological

With no real base for morals, one is left with manipulation, using religious words to motivate people to treat nature better.

ideological base for these reasons: (1) the pantheistic view of nature (God is one with everything) has no answer for "abnormalities" in nature, (2) the only "results" one gets from using the pantheism-based moral argument come by inappropriately projecting man's feelings into nature (when we see a chicken, we endow its love life with human qualities, but this evades the reality of the chicken),²² and (3) the pantheist has no real base for the dignity of man and, therefore, man is brought to a low, impersonal level rather than being elevated to a level of dignity and responsibility. An example, of course, is the economic dilemma of India where rats and cows are allowed to eat food needed by people.²³

4. *A "Poor" Christianity is not the answer.*

There is also a form of Christianity that does not provide a proper view of nature and our relation to it. Schaeffer cites Byzantine and pre-Renaissance Christianity, which maintained that the only truly valuable thing was heavenly—so much so that only symbolic representations were used in the artwork of the era. Only heavenly things mattered in life, thus, there was no proper emphasis on nature.

Any Christianity that rests upon a dichotomy—some sort of Platonic concept—does not have an answer to nature; and we must say with sorrow that much orthodoxy, much evangelical Christianity, is rooted in a Platonic concept. In this kind of Christianity there is only interest in the "upper story," in the heavenly things—only in "saving the soul" and getting it to Heaven.²⁴

In such Christianity, nature serves only as an apologetic for the existence of God, with little value in itself:

"...look at nature," we are told; "look at the Alps. God must have made them." And that is the end.²⁵

Further, Dr. Schaeffer suggests that our desecration of nature and failure to uphold and respect its beauty is seen by the unbeliever as a reflection of the character and nature of the God we

profess. Sadly, this contributes to his rejection of God. As Christians under the watchful eye of the world, it is important to assume responsibility for, and to project a proper relationship toward, the world we believe has been created by a good and holy God.

5. *The proper Christian view of nature begins with creation.*

Fortunately, there is a genuine, biblical view that provides a sufficient ideological basis for understanding and addressing the ecological problem. This view begins with creation. God was there before the beginning of space and time and God created everything out of nothing. The visible world is not the extension of the essence of God as advocated by the pantheist. All created things have an objective existence in themselves, apart from God. They are really there.²⁶ It is this biblical view of nature that gives nature a value in itself. Nature is not merely an apologetic for God's existence. It is of value in itself because God made it:

...after the Reformation, Dutch painters began to paint nature, no longer feeling any necessity to restrict themselves to religious subjects. If nature is therefore worth painting, so the nature which we paint is also worth something in itself. This is the true Christian mentality. It rests upon the reality of creation out of nothing by God.²⁷

Schaeffer then goes on to explain that understanding the nature of God is critical to understanding the relationship between man and nature.

The Judeo-Christian God is unique in that He is, at the same time, both infinite and personal. Regarding His infiniteness, He has created and is above all things; He *alone* is the Creator. Man, the flowers, the butterflies, the streams, the Alps, these are equally separated from Him in that He created them all. God who is infinite is separate and distinct from all of creation, which is finite.²⁸

This of course strikes at the heart of the pantheistic view. The infinite God stands over against and outside of nature. Yet, all finite things, including man, are created by God, out

Nature is not merely an apologetic for God's existence. It is of value in itself because God made it.

of nothing, and are thus equal in their origin.²⁹ But God is also personal, and the personal God has created man in His own image. And only man! The flowers, the butterflies, the streams, the Alps are not created in the image of God. They are not personal; only man is personal. Man is distinct from nature because he is made in the image of God; that is, he alone has personality and as such is unique in all of creation.³⁰

So, Schaeffer argues, we are separated from the "lower" forms of creation by virtue of our being made in God's image, yet we are united with them through being made by the same Creator. There *is* a sense in which the tree is a creature like man and man ought to feel this, not only for apologetic or even aesthetic reasons, but because the tree like man is a creature of the same God. God made both. We should treat the tree with respect because the tree like us is made by God.³¹ Yet the tree is a tree, not a person. The tree is not made in the image of God. We should reject the romanticizing tendencies of the pantheist, who injects human feelings and reactions into the tree, such as "pain" over being cut down. When we strike an ax into a tree to make firewood, we are not cutting down a person, but a tree. This is an appropriate use of the tree which we respect as made by God. Since God treats each aspect of His creation with integrity, in keeping with the way it truly is, should we not also treat our fellow-creatures with the same integrity? If God treats a tree like a tree, shouldn't man treat a tree like a tree—and for the highest reason: because he loves God who made the tree?³²

So, while there is some truth to Dr. Lynn White's assertion that Christianity is the cause of our ecological problems, it is not because Christianity does not have the answer, but because Christians have not acted on the answer it has. We have not acted on that which we know, or should know, to be true—that the tree is a creature of God. We may have an application or obedience problem but we have no Scriptural problem.

6. The proper Christian view of nature should include "substantial healing."

We know from Scripture that all of creation, including nature, is subject to the Fall and that,

at some time in the future, all of creation will be redeemed. The blood of Christ will redeem man and nature together (Rom. 8:19-23). Dr. Schaeffer points out that in Romans 6 Paul extends this future promise forward to our present situation:

It is the great principle of Christian spirituality. Christ died, Christ is our Savior, Christ is coming back to raise us from the dead. So by faith we are to live this way substantially now. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." So we look forward to this, and one day it will be perfect. But we should be looking now, on the basis of the work of Christ, for substantial healing in every area affected by the Fall.³³

There are several divisions, or fractures in relationships, brought about by the Fall beyond the separation between man and God, including the psychological separation of man from himself, the sociological division from other men, the division of man from nature, and nature from nature. When Christ returns, there will be a complete healing of all of these relationships. But the Christian must also believe that there is to be real and evident healing even now, not perfect healing, but "substantial healing," using Dr. Schaeffer's term.

But how is this healing of man's relation to nature to be achieved? By understanding and acting upon the truth that our dominion over nature (Gen. 1:26-28) does not make the natural world ours to do with as we please. It belongs to God and we are to exercise our dominion, or rule, over it as something borrowed or held in trust. Man's dominion is under God's dominion.³⁴ We are to treat the things of nature as having value in themselves, which means that we are to exercise dominion without destruction.

One of the first fruits of that healing is a new sense of beauty....God has made man with a sense of beauty no animal has; no animal has ever produced a work of art. Man as made in the image of God has an

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aesthetic quality, and as soon as he begins to deal with nature as he should, beauty is preserved in nature. But also, economic and human value accrue, for the problems of ecology we have now will diminish.³⁵

So, there is a real answer to the ecological crisis. There is no need, following Drs. White and Means, to seek another ideological underpinning for understanding our responsibility toward creation. The church historically may be guilty of poor teaching and application in regard to the man-nature relationship, but Scripture is clear and true. There is no need to turn to the East or to some pre-Christian spiritism for the answer.

7. *Christians have a practical, day-to-day responsibility to be stewards of nature.*

In the final chapter, Dr. Schaeffer presents a number of practical applications of the ideological base he has established. Essentially, he says, we must learn to say "STOP!" We need to establish conscious limits on our materialism—self imposed limits. When we have learned and put into practice the Christian view of nature, then there can be a real ecology which includes humans:

...beauty will flow, psychological freedom will come, and the world will cease to be turned into a desert. Because it is right, on the basis of the whole Christian system—which is strong enough to stand it all because it is true—I can say as I face the buttercup: "Fellow-creature, fellow-creature, I won't walk on you. We are both creatures together."³⁶

Dr. Schaeffer's assessment seems to have had an immediate short term impact among Christians at the time, especially with students at colleges and universities, with seminary students, and with Christian professors.³⁷ In the time period shortly after the publication of *Pollution and the Death of Man*, there was a spate of articles responding to Dr. White's pronouncements of four to six years before. One can posit that Dr. Schaeffer's ideas may have influenced and trig-

gered the response of some of the others. Consider these words by Donald E. Gowan, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, in *Christian Century* (October 7, 1970):

Genesis is under fire again—this time from the ecologists....Western man, it is being said, has found in the Scriptures his justification for plundering the earth of its natural resources; so the Bible and the church are at fault for setting our civilization on the potentially disastrous course it has taken....I propose a defense, indeed a counterattack....(based) on an accurate reading of the Bible and of history.³⁸

Dr. Carl Reidel, Assistant Director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Williams College, was interviewed in a special issue of *Christianity Today* (April 23, 1971) and had these comments:

White places the blame for the Western world's exploitation of nature squarely on our Judeo-Christian tradition. The crisis, so the argument goes, has its origin in Genesis 1:26, where man is commanded to fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion ... over every living thing... White's thesis has its real impact in that it "threatens to distract attention from the real problems of the relationship between the earth and mankind....Christianity is becoming a major target of environmental activists, but not because we are worse offenders than anyone else or because we are the contemporary link to the Judeo-Christian heritage some hold responsible for technological pollution. We are criticized, I believe, because we claim the highest values and show little outward evidence of practicing what we preach."³⁹

It is fruitful, in closing, to ask, "Did we listen?" Did the church respond to Dr. Schaeffer's assessment, and to similar assessments by these and other Christian writers at the beginning of the environmental movement 26 years ago? To a large degree, the answer, sadly, is no—we did not listen. With respect to Dr. Schaeffer the broader

There is no need, following Drs. White and Means, to seek another ideological underpinning for understanding our responsibility toward creation.

evangelical church treated this subject as an aberration of an otherwise astute thinker.⁴⁰ Maybe its plate was too full—after all, the abortion issue had exploded in 1973, the economy had soured in the '70s accentuating the need to raise money for buildings and ministries, and the political process had given birth to the Christian Right, including the Moral Majority, which did not hold environmental issues high on its list of concerns. Truly the ecology issue, born of the leftist counter-culture, was easy for the church, and especially for evangelicals, to ignore.

Dr. Schaeffer predicted that if the church did not become involved in this debate, then the emerging environmental movement would look increasingly toward the East, toward pantheism, for its ideological base. This indeed has happened.

Individual believers, of course, have taken up the challenge—and we have seen small environmental groups of a Christian ideological perspective get a toe-hold in the public marketplace of ideas—but it's at best a niche effort. Much work needs to be done. Nevertheless, the foundation laid by Dr. Schaeffer in *Pollution and the Death of Man* continues to provide nurture for many of these endeavors.

Meanwhile ecological problems have continued to grow. The more science that is applied, the more we realize the seriousness of our plight—oil spills, global warming, air pollution, the loss of rain forests, species extinction, loss of biological diversity, pollution of our rivers, oceans and wetlands—these remain daily news items. Yet churches are still cutting off their lights only to save money, not because of the need to reduce the demand for electricity with its rampant consumption of our limited fossil fuels, and not because of a biblically thought-out understanding of what it means to exercise proper "dominion" over nature.

The battle of ideas continues a quarter of a century after Drs. Schaeffer, White, and Means. In a review of the book *The Cross and the Rain Forest*, the reviewer cautions:

We feel it is necessary to warn Christians of the pitfalls which can ensue from embracing the Green movement, as it is currently constituted, too warmly. At the heart of Greenery lie values which are fun-

damentally different from those of our Judeo-Christian tradition.⁴¹

And another recent book review is insightful:

The Lost Gospel of the Earth (by Tom Hayden) is yet another manifestation of enviro-paganism, a call for "a kind of reverse second coming, in which we experience a redemptive return of the sacred to inhabit the earth before it is further abused." What does he mean by the *sacred*? "The ancient awe of our sacred environment amounts to a lost gospel of the earth, which existed among indigenous people long before the rise of monotheism." With this Mr. Hayden would replace Christianity.⁴²

Then, one has to be struck by the lack of an adequate ideological/moral base in the current public debate between PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), the radical animal rights group, and ACT-UP (the equally radical homosexual rights organization) over the use of animals for AIDS research. PETA is totally opposed to the use of animals for medical research in any way, including finding a cure for AIDS. "We'd be against it" even if animal research resulted in a cure for AIDS say the leaders of PETA. This debate surfaced recently when AIDS activists wanted to wear their red ribbons of AIDS awareness to a PETA fund-raising gala at the Paramount Pictures backlot, sponsored by Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin.⁴³

Surely there is much work to be done. May we rediscover the truths set out in Francis Schaeffer's *Pollution and the Death of Man*, and may we speak and apply those truths in love into this current generation.

ENDNOTES

¹ W. L. Bullock, "Ecology and Apocalypse," *Christianity Today*, April 23, 1971, pp. 20.

² Jonathan Adler, *Environmentalism at the Crossroads: Green Activism in America*, excerpt republished on the Capital Research Center web site, www.capitalresearch.org/crc/books/green.html, 1996.

³ Adler.

Truly the ecology issue, born of the leftist counter-culture, was easy for the church, and especially for evangelicals, to ignore.

⁴ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, March 10, 1967, pp. 1203.

⁵ White, pp. 1204.

⁶ White, pp. 1205.

⁷ White, pp. 1205.

⁸ White, pp. 1205.

⁹ White, pp. 1205.

¹⁰ White, pp. 1206.

¹¹ Richard L. Means, "Why Worry About Nature?", *Saturday Review*, December 2, 1967, pp. 14.

¹² Means, p. 15.

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, "King in the Kingdom of Things," *Christian Century*, September 10, 1969, pp. 1165.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, pp. 1165-66.

¹⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992), p. 108.

¹⁶ Schaeffer, p. 109.

¹⁷ Schaeffer, p. 9.

¹⁸ Schaeffer p. 10.

¹⁹ Schaeffer, pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Schaeffer, p. 26.

²¹ Schaeffer, p. 30.

²² Schaeffer, p. 32.

²³ Schaeffer, p. 34.

²⁴ Schaeffer, p. 41.

²⁵ Schaeffer, p. 41.

²⁶ Schaeffer, p. 45.

²⁷ Schaeffer, p. 47.

²⁸ Schaeffer, p. 48.

²⁹ Schaeffer, p. 47.

³⁰ Schaeffer, p. 49.

³¹ Schaeffer, p. 54.

³² Schaeffer, p. 57.

³³ Schaeffer, p. 64.

³⁴ Schaeffer, p. 69.

³⁵ Schaeffer, p. 73.

³⁶ Schaeffer, p. 95.

³⁷ Unfortunately, Dr. Schaeffer's personal correspondence is still being microfilmed and catalogued and, hence, is not yet available for study. One can speculate, however, that he had much correspondence with his peers on this subject of man and nature.

³⁸ Donald E. Gowan, "Genesis and Ecology: Does 'Subdue' mean 'Plunder'?" *Christian Century*, October 7, 1970, pp. 1188.

³⁹ Carl H. Reidel, "Christianity and the Environmental Crisis," *Christianity Today*, April 23,

1971, pp. 5.

⁴⁰ Dean Ohlman, 1996, private correspondence.

⁴¹ Doug Bandow, "The Christian Calling," *World Magazine*, November 30/December 7, 1996, p. 24.

⁴² Doug Bandow, "Checkmating History," *World Magazine*, November 16, 1996, p. 23-24.

⁴³ Michael E. Debakey, "Hype and Hypocrisy on Human Rights", *Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 1996.

A Correction

In the Spring 1995 issue of *Faith and Practice*, the last three endnotes were mistakenly omitted in William B. Evans' article entitled "Rebaptism." In addition, a long quotation by Geoffrey Bromiley was not properly set off from the rest of the text. The corrected section of the article containing these mistakes is included below, along with the the endnotes that were left out. To receive the entire corrected article, write us at *Faith and Practice*, and we will be glad to send you a copy.

...When speaking of a "true church" we should recognize that there are degrees of adherence to the truth.¹⁶ We Presbyterians maintain that the system of doctrine enshrined in the Westminster Standards faithfully summarizes the teaching of Scripture, but we also recognize that the church must always be reforming itself in obedience to God's Word. There are sound theological and historical reasons, then, for continuing the classical Christian practice of requiring adherence to the Trinitarian orthodoxy as the only test of baptismal validity.

Ecclesial Application

The theology of baptism suggests that rebaptism in instances where a valid baptism has already occurred runs counter to the symbolic nature of the sacrament itself. The confessional prohibition on rebaptism is well-founded and ought to be observed. But here, of course, pastoral considerations must not be ignored. Pastors and elders do not wish to squelch the zeal of new church members and converts and the temptation to grant requests for rebaptism is sometimes strong. The irony here is that in acceding to such requests the pastor or session squanders a tremendous pastoral opportunity to teach about the true significance of baptism and the grace we have in Jesus Christ. Also, the rebaptism of some will inevitably cause others to doubt the validity of their infant baptism. Geoffrey Bromiley phrases it well:

In view of the biblical significance of bap-

tism, churches should not give, and their members should not expect or request, a repetition of baptism when some first or new experience of the work or gifts of the Holy Spirit is enjoyed. Instead, they should be taught more effectively the meaning of the baptism they have as a sign and seal of the saving work of God, and thereby be led to see in any new experience the fulfillment of this work and of baptism as its sign. God is one, the covenant is one, and the work of God is one. So, too, baptism is one. There may be many experiences as we enter into God and his work, but there cannot be many baptisms, only a richer identification with that which baptism signifies.¹⁷

How can this baptismal teaching be applied in the church today? It should go without saying that requests for rebaptism must be met with tact and sympathy. Individuals request rebaptism because they want to do the right thing. Our pastoral goal should be to add maturity and understanding to that nascent faith and zeal.

Look again at the cases mentioned at the beginning of this article. Bob's situation is doubtless the most common and probably the least complicated to address. As we have seen, baptism does not signify our experience of faith. While our spiritual lives tend to be episodic, with ups and downs, God is at work in His people throughout their lives, and His saving plan is certain from all eternity (Eph. 1:3-6). Baptism signifies and seals God's promises to us in Jesus Christ, and thus baptism is relevant to the entirety of our Christian lives. As Bob begins to realize that God's dealings with him did not begin with his conversion experience, he will be better able to appreciate and to build upon, or "improve" his infant baptism...¹⁸

¹⁶ So argues Charles Hodge, "General Assembly," pp. 462-68.

¹⁷ Bromiley, *Children of Promise*, pp. 109-110.

¹⁸ Note the emphasis on "the needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism" in Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 167, and Mark Ross' article on the subject elsewhere in this issue.