
A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

CONSERVATION IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

The title chosen for this paper is meant to reflect something of the theological style set out by Paul Lehmann in his essay 'On doing theology: a contextual possibility'. 'Contextualism', he says, 'as a theological method, may be said to be that way of doing theology which seeks to explore and to exhibit the dialectical relation between the content and the setting of theology'.[1] The theologian (indeed any and every Christian seeing that we are all engaged in living out the life of faith which when articulated can be called theology) is placed in that area of creative tension where that which gives life, the Gospel, inherited and appropriated from the past, is brought into relation with the present, the context of our living. In a process of fusion and fission, in the words of the early independent leader, John Robinson, 'God hath yet more light and truth to break forth'.[2] Or in Barth's more startling phrases, 'a wide reading of contemporary secular literature - especially of newspapers - is therefore recommended to anyone desirous of understanding the Epistle to the Romans'[3]- or the Gospel in any form.

Such a reference, therefore, indicates first of all the method involved. Conservation has become a major factor in our society at all levels from national and international politics to our own personal health and freedom. It is by listening to the deliberations of scientists, planners, population experts, and taking note of social, ethical and political questions that the issues begin to become clear. The Christian, however, listens as one who brings to it perspective of faith: 'though this does not mean that there are Christian answers waiting fully armed in the wings'.[4] Rather in the dialectical relation we believe it is possible for there to emerge insights and comments that will illuminate the scene and, for the Christian specifically, a clearer vision will emerge of 'what God is doing in the world' and his appropriate response. So we are not involved in a 'theology of conservation', nor in 'theology and conservation', but in theologising in relation to conservation and looking at conservation in relation to theology.

This leads to an indication of the limitations of what is here being attempted. It can only be exploratory in the most elementary sense. In any case the issues are so wide and the debate so recently begun that at this stage, certainly theologically, there is little more than a clearing of the ground, some unearthing of issues. Therefore it would seem best to start from some of the important questions that conservation thrusts at theology and really only to note some tentative areas for discussion, a start for a programme for 'doing theology' in this area. This means, of course, that the traditional framework of theological thinking is pushed aside, drawing together various areas such as ethics and dogmatics in a way that may demand more careful discrimination at later stages.

It may also appear that the range of questions raised here is somewhat arbitrary. There is no pretence at inclusiveness. However, a number of issues, lying behind the more immediately obvious and practical areas of concern, have been selected mainly in order to draw attention to matters which in the long run may be more important as informing the basic assumptions from which policies and actions arise.[5]

I CHRISTIANITY AND THE ORIGINS OF SCIENCE

It has been widely recognised that the emergence of modern science and technology was possible, in some part at least, as a product of the Christian understanding of man in nature.[6] Christianity makes two positive assertions. The doctrine of creation asserts that man is set as a free agent in a world that is not sacralised in some mythical or mystical way. He is therefore free to explore and investigate natural processes. Secondly, the doctrine of salvation implies that there is movement in history towards a consummation which gives birth to the idea of progress, and man's participation in the activity of God. Thus, it is argued, Western man was provided with the ideology, the framework of ideas, that released the scientific industrial revolutions. The conservation crisis is a product of Western technological society. As important as the scientific data is its cultural basis. Hence we find as one of the most interesting features of recent writing on the problem of the environment constant references to Christianity. This is all the more important since there is, *prima facie*, a conflict for, while the conservationists are drawing attention to the crisis produced by technological exploitation, much Christian assessment has been to welcome the freedom of scientific, secular man.[7]

The evaluation of Christianity by conservationists has, broadly, been expressed in three ways:

(i) As religious belief has declined in recent generations, there is a feeling that the restraints provided by the belief in nature as the gift of God to be cherished and valued have been lost too. There is, therefore, an appeal for the Church to re-emphasise this aspect of her teaching and for men to respect more seriously the natural world.[8] This can be summed up in a Sussex Rogation prayer:

> When we are careless with the beasts and forget
> they are God's creatures:
> When we are unkind to men and forget they are
> God's children:
> When we illtreat the land and forget it is the
> splendour of God:
> O God, forgive us.[9]

(ii) In contrast to that is the assertion that Christianity is the villain of the piece. Expressed in different ways, the loss of the mystical in nature together with the command to 'be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth' are seen to

have opened the floodgates for men's aggressive expansion across the face of the earth, resulting in disaster. In his characteristically downright way Max Nicholson says: 'it is a tragedy that of all the religions in the world it should have been one of the very few which preached man's unqualified right of dominance over nature which became the most powerful and influential, through the agencies of ancient Judaism and modern Christianity'. Further, at the point when modern technology has changed the balance radically in favour of man over natural forces of control (death, disease, famine) nothing appears to be done by the Churches to re-assess the situation theologically. 'Rather their adherents have, with few exceptions, persisted in behaving as rampant Old Testament tribes'.[10]

Alongside this, however, appeal is made to another Christian tradition, though often forgotten. This is the pattern set by St Cuthbert, St Francis and others, of living close to nature, seeing all creation as one family, 'a democracy of God creatures'. Francis' view of nature and of man, it is said, 'rested on a unique sort of pan-psychism of all things animate and inanimate, designed for the glorification of their transcendent creator who, in the ultimate gesture of cosmic humility, assumed flesh, lay helpless in a manger and hung dying on a scaffold'.[11] In parenthesis, it is interesting to note how close this argument is to the religious interpretations of the mystical culture of the communes and other post rationalists.

(iii) Thirdly, note must be taken of the interesting and valuable contribution of Professor John Black (of London). He argues that any society 'which includes amongst its earliest and most tenaciously held beliefs a concept of its right to dominion over nature is faced with a paradox: the fullest exploitation involves its eventual destruction'.[12] Therefore there has to be a second counter principle of control, checking exploitation, applied to assessing social possibilities. This is the weakness of the situation. Christianity put forward the idea of stewardship. Secularised bourgeois society defended the idea of private property in inequality and individual freedom. Modern society tends to turn to the state as the guardian of social welfare. Other criteria are also discussed: the idea of progress, responsibility to posterity. None, however, seem to be able to answer the case. Either they have been too decisively rejected or are philosophically and ethically inadequate. The difficulty is that the sort of change needed to produce a readjustment in society takes generations and we have not the time at our disposal and no criterion adequately familiar or immediately to hand is available. It would therefore appear that, while conservation policies are worth striving for, it is very much a last ditch stand against the almost inexorable tides of technological exploitation.

These three views illustrate the complex nature of the evidence and the varieties of interpretation possible. One thing is certain: a great deal more work has to be done on the relationship between science and Christianity in the history of

the West since the Renaissance. It is not clear how far and when modern science broke loose from its origins and developed an ideology of its own. In any case there are a number of strands in scientific thought not all obviously compatible with each other: the empirical Baconian natural science; mathematically based sciences; evolutionary biology. Again there is doubt as to how science and technology are related. Certainly technologically dominated research is a much more recent phenomenon. Then there is the question of religious man. Weber's thesis linking capitalism and protestantism is being closely re-examined. Alongside this ought to be more attention to the relation between religion and technological development.[13] How far were Puritan ideas of stewardship and industry sources of inspiration for or justification of intensive exploitation of nature? Or was it 'laissez faire' pragmatic untilitarianism? But even if a river is fed by a spring, the water from that tributary is not the whole river. It is certainly diluted. It may indeed be just that water that keeps it sufficiently pure to allow fish to live in the main stream. How strong is the Christian influence?

In any case the Gospel is not the Church. The Church is in the awkward position of being both the custodian of the Gospel and a social institution.[14] For an incarnational religion this is necessary. But it does mean that most often the Church, like the chameleon, takes on the colour of its contemporary background. The treasure is in an earthen vessel. It is often only a prophetic remnant that is over against the world, the Church and the devil. 'Christianity' must not be equated simply with Christian teaching or ideals. Rather what we are dealing with is a very human body which, however inadequately, offers itself as the means through which the dynamic of the Spirit can work. Nor is the 'Christianity' which is invoked as the source of western culture a static thing but constantly changing, growing, rethinking, reformulating its ideas, quarrelling and divided. Like any other historical entity, it suffers the mutations and relativities of history.

Omitted from almost all of these discussions but ultimately related are the concepts of sin and judgement. It is one of man's dominant characteristics that he can interpret anything to his own advantage. Kierkegaard considered the primary sin to be sloth.[15] It may be, therefore, that the equating of dominion with exploitation is a corruption, a half truth, eagerly seized upon. It is man's way of abusing his freedom by turning a trust into licence, a privilege into absolute right. The other half of the passage on man's dominion talks about God's image. To have God's image is to reflect God's character and purposes.[16] There was a sure instinct (if not always clearly understood) in linking 'fall' and the loss of image.[17] So too there is judgement. If the crisis, whatever its material cause, is due to the wrong value system, then the Christian must talk in terms of judgement. This not primarily in terms of 'I told you so', but as pointing to a need for radical change, repentance, a new direction. The

judgement, however, is as much or more on the Church for its dereliction of duty, its failure to speak a living word in our time.

So, while there is an intimate link between Christianity and Western technocratic culture, this is not a straightforward matter open to simple description. It is as complicated as the working of grace in the human personality: a subtle interweaving of factors all present and discerned as much by faith as by analysis. Yet analysis is wanted so that more and more clearly we can see how faith, prophecy and cult exist socially, for only so will it be possible adequately to address the situation.

II THE CONTEMPORARY CRISIS

The interest in the past arises out of concern for the present. The situation is in some ways stark and simple. Hitherto man's ways with nature, his assault on the environment and exploitation of natural resources have been contained sufficiently well for the underlying trends to be unnoticed or ignored, to be assimilated gradually over time. Now this is impossible. The threefold crisis in technology, population and pollution has thrust into human consciousness the enormity of the situation and the need to discover new attitudes, new social patterns, new ways of understanding how to live with and use the world, which has been described as a 'planetry space ship'.[18] The point has been reached when the question has to be faced: when there is no more room how do we change from expansion to containment? This has been well illustrated in 'the tragedy of the commons' in which, on imaginary common land, the users have to regulate the numbers of cattle allowed free run.[19] The point is that it looks as though we have arrived at the end of a particular line of development. Something has happened which will have to force a new pattern on man, parallel if not more drastic than those other pivotal points of man's history such as the emergence of the city, or the expansion of Europe.[20]

Some would want to place the situation in which man finds himself on a much wider canvas. According to Teilhard de Chardin,[21] this is part of a much wider upheaval in the story of man. In man (and a number of other evolutionists find themselves in close agreement with much of his thought) there emerges a new factor in evolution because man is a reflective, purposing, designing creature. In the sphere of the 'noosphere' (or mind) evolution becomes self conscious. Man is therefore responsible for something of his destiny. But there is a second stage in which the potential of mind is more clearly realised. When man has covered the surface of the globe after several thousands of years (a process done not very differently from, if more effectively than, other species), then the frontiers have reached their natural limits, then man is thrown back onto himself. The only area open for his development is in greater socialisation, greater interiorisation of consciousness and the growth of love (amorisation).

Thus there is a reversal in the diversification which has hitherto been normal for evolution towards a unification which will comprehend the past into a single whole. This end of the process, the Omega point, will be reached through the Christosphere, to 'summing up all things in Christ'.[22] This is what the 20th century is about. While he did not appreciate what the 60s and 70s were to bring, his intuitive analysis is still valuable.

Even if we are not followers of Teilhard, the critical significance of certain points of history can still be appreciated in Christian terms. Scholars have long pointed out (and variously interpreted) that the idea of a crisis time, a time of judgement (Kairos) is a central factor in the Biblical understanding of history.[23] From the point of view of Christian faith, the crisis point is the Christ event to which all other events are related in a double way. History is related to the possibility of the new. Every time is time for opportunity. So our time is part of the freedom given to seize the chance to actualise more of the Christ. On the other hand, it is a time of judgement, of breaking down, of upheaval. In the midst of our times it is possible to appreciate the sense of crisis. It is easy to see this concern for environment as part of the end of one era and the emergence of a new, in line with the revolt against tradition and the search for new awareness, new community and new religion. Nor should the Church be surprised, because it is part of the Gospel, that there is a shaking of the foundations in history, there are signs of the new creation, there is always a pressing towards the mark, an openness to the future. Faith is just that freedom that can accept the future as it comes and seeks constantly to mould it.[24]

III THE STYLE OF LIFE

If we are indeed living through one of the crises of history, then this is bound to involve a radical re-appraisal of social styles and attitudes. Indeed the broad issues are fairly clear: on the one hand there is an expansionist, exploiting, technologically based society, that appears prodigal of resources and reckons wealth in terms of growth and 'standards of living'; on the other hand, ranging from out and out prophets of doom to more moderate but no less committed conservationists, there is a demand to reverse the Gadarene madness and to rebuild the basis of our use and understanding of the natural world, to control technological application, and to discover a new economic structure. But the transitions from one to the other and the forging of the new consensus is not a matter of mere opinion forming. In it is involved the halting of a process that has become axiomatic to most people, that has become embodied in institutions and procedures, that has been heavily invested in at all levels, that is a highly charged political confrontation. This cannot be avoided.[25] Moreover, it runs right through other legitimate demands and aspirations: the advancement of the third world or the working classes. One of the great tensions that has to be tackled

radically is that too easily conservation looks like the desire of the affluent, the bourgeois or the educated to retain what they have and enjoy, at the expense of the underprivileged, the overcrowded or the underdeveloped. There is indeed great suspicion shown by the developing nations and, in the west, organised labour.

In this context the Christian needs both to affirm the reality of the Gospel and to work out the style of his commitment. As usual there is going to be the paradox of divisive reconciliation which results in a tension which has to be contained, until through the conflict a new reality can emerge. The Gospel points to freedom and release. The New Testament speaks of the broken powers of the demons that keep man in thrall to the patterns and standards of this present age.[26] The chains that bind us are snapped. There is no need to elevate into laws of nature, which act by blind necessity, accidental historical conditions of human existence. This is not to deny economic and ecological realities, but these are our servants not our masters. What is needed is to dethrone false gods, to exercise the ordered freedom of the sons of God. Yet it is through repentance and faith that freedom is found. Here is the call to renounce the past, to shake loose of its demands, and to believe that the possibility of the new is the only reality. Indeed, it is the possibility of the renewal in Christ that opens up the future, that makes it all worthwhile, and suggests that the battle must be fought. It is this possibility that is also the model and aim: that men shall be one in him in a creation that affords its fruits.

The working out of this, however, involves long and detailed and continuous study and planned committed action. Nor can it be left to the experts and politicians. The opinion-forming actions of individuals and local communities are essential. Perhaps most important of all is not the overt demonstration or protest, but the ability quietly and as part of a life style to embody the Christian perspective. Dr E. F. Schumacher[27] sees the task of the Church in this situation to 'define "enough"', that is, to suggest a limit to economic growth, to control the pattern of a consumer society. This is the counterpart of the need to ensure economic and social justice. It is not that everyone can reach the level of the most affluent, but that there is a proper level of common wealth which is commensurate with planetry resources. (It is, however, impossible to divorce this from the problem of population growth). What this might mean at a more intimate level was perhaps illustrated in an interview with Harvey Cox.[28] He had deliberately set aside a number of the adjuncts of civilisation (telephone, T.V., car) in a form of 'technological asceticism', experimenting with a simpler style of life, not as a permanent sacrificial commitment, but just as 'a more human way of living' by 'breaking the habit of the egocentric accumulation'. He saw the problems of an alternative society and conservation as inextricably interwoven, and rejoiced in 'an enormous openness on the part of an awful lot of young people to a way of life, a way of organising existence, which

is not predicated on advancement and productivity and efficiency and accumulation'.

An interesting article by Thomas Hearn[29] illustrates another aspect: the need to reformulate the underlying image of what is 'manliness'. Here is another fetter to be snapped because we too easily conform to the demanded role. Declaring that 'Jesus was a sissy after all', he pointed out that the new image of manhood might point us to a new appreciation of Jesus of Nazareth as depicted in the Gospels. For far too long we have felt obliged to apologise for 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild'. Somehow he had to be matched to the John Wayne image of 'the all-American male'. 'Men are required to be empirical, sceptical hard nosed... Men are unlovely (think of what the *Mr* America contest is!), and the basic masculine responses to things are untilitarian and functional rather than aesthetic'. In these terms Jesus was a sissy. But why should this be so? Surely the enjoyment of beauty and goodness is essential to human fulfilment? Why should our attitude to the environment be one of aggression? While it is true that aesthetic arguments in conservation, as anywhere else, must be recognised as such and need to stand alongside economic and other reasons, there is no reason for them to be dismissed as mere sentimentality'.[30] As Teilhard has somewhere said, 'Nature is the art of God'. Nature can also be an art form for man.

IV INCIPIENT METAPHYSICS

Ecology is the examination of a species (or individual or group) in relation to its environment. The unit of study can be comparatively small or highly complex. Normally detailed study is of a comprehensible size, but broader studies can be made, e.g. whole island groups where the inter-relation of fauna and flora can be mapped out. An ecosystem is the described pattern of inter-relationships which describes the various interdependent factors that stabilise or order the cycle of the system. Man, as we are all now aware, is both dependent on his environment and influences it. Human ecology is the study of man's place in nature. But as soon as man is introduced it becomes a matter of conservation: i.e. applied ecology open to choices, policies and decisions. For, from the initial interest in the feeding patterns of a species, there is a direct line through the whole biological world, its existence in the world of land, air and water, to man as a moral social, reflective cultural creature, with his religion, his ultimate concern as to what and who he is. In other words, ecology and conservation has drawn attention to the unity of existence; that in the end the most remote event or inert matter is bound to each one of us. 'No man is an island', declared John Donne; true in a total and all inclusive way. Even God is part of the ecosystem.

The idea of metaphysics has not been popular in recent decades, especially among the philosophers, though happily the prospect is not now so bleak. The critique will have been

valuable. Any attempt to construct a metaphysic or to have a comprehensive view of existence has its dangers. But, as Ian Barbour argues, 'we cannot remain content with a plurality of unrelated languages. "Complementary languages" are, after all, languages about a single world'.[31] Thus it is necessary to go on exploring the relation between science and religion, man and nature, culture and economic resources. There is a demand that life be seen whole and that life be meaningful. It is not that there will emerge a single all-embracing final system which will stifle further exploration and adjustment. Surely the scientific revolution has destroyed that possibility. But reality is one, though multiform. At least the emergence of the 'synthetic sciences', such as ecology, as they increase in importance, suggests that this is the logic of the situation.

At this point, however, it is worth drawing attention to some related matters which indicate, first, a possible danger and, secondly, a consequence.

In the desire for a comprehensive understanding of man in his existence the great temptation is to discover a key that will unlock all the doors and to search for this, therefore, in an area which would appear to be fundamental or basic. In other words, to understand man by what he has in common with other parts of the natural world or in fundamental physical and chemical processes, a highest common factor or lowest common denominator, rather than by what makes man distinctively human. It is not surprising that in an age of ecological interest attention will be focussed very largely on the relation between man and the animals. By studying ethology (comparative behaviour patterns), certain principles are built up by which man's behaviour can be described by drawing parallels or suggesting what evolutionary developments have taken place or could take place. So the study of territorial behaviour can tell us about the breakdown of human society; or the tribal consciousness of rats illuminates the caste system of human groups. The highly sophisticated and complex cultural and social life of man is to be 'decoded' into the simpler pattern of animal behaviour from which man evolved.[32]

However, such attempts must be seriously questioned in so far as they attempt to point to the only significant factors for the understanding of man. Indeed, it would seem that the evidence certainly is in dispute and the interpretation suspect, that 'we are in fact in the middle of a propaganda battle'. In any case, the whole argument presupposes that man is to be understood by his origins, that he is 'nothing but' an animal (machine or process). The concept of evolution, however, must allow for the emergence of something new (even if implicit) in the system which is not just a complex form of what went before but something qualitatively new. Man is a self-conscious being with powers of reflection and decision. This enables him to transcend the limits of his animal existence, to change his environment, to choose his way of life. It is more logical, in fact, to understand the lower by the higher. To answer the question 'What is man?', account must

be taken of him as creature, but also and more decisively, as explorer, thinker and philosopher.

In recent Christian thinking, three parallel important strands have emerged which bear directly on this in a special way. The Church has always taught, of course, that man is to be understood in the light of his relation to God. Man is the creature who, as priest in creation, worships God and ministers to the world of living creatures on God's behalf. Man articulates the reality of the living God as creator, sustainer and saviour of the world. But this, in classical theology, has been in terms of God as the source of existence rather than as the goal of existence - though both have always been present. This is part of the creative tension inherent in Christianity. Now, however, interest has been placed on the future, on emergent values, on God who calls man into the fulness of existence. The three foci for this approach have been the Catholic Teilhard de Chardin; the American protestants like Hartshorn and John Cobb, who derive their philosophical basis from the process thought of A. N. Whitehead (closely related to William Temple's thought in *Nature, Man and God*); and the Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenburg, who wants to revive some of the Hegelian ideas about the meaning of history. For all three, man is in dynamic movement in history, changing and growing, one with the total process of world creation, yet active and responsible within it. At the same time, a true glimpse has been provided in Christ as to what this is all about and where it should go.

Nevertheless, as the second point and a consequence of the expression of the incipient metaphysics, this is not to dismiss the importance of ethology and the study of man's origins. While man cannot be reduced to the animal, he is still a creature. The growing understanding of man as he relates to nature and to his own make-up, physically, socially and psychologically, may well suggest some general picture of what it is to be human; of what the limits are in various directions before life ceases to be tolerable and decent (for example, levels of noise or overcrowding or nourishment). Such a map of the boundaries of human existence would not be rigid but would give guidelines in the field of choice, though some areas would be more precise than others, e.g. lead pollution over against population density. Again, such a description would not be permanent in the sense it would be open to change and adaptation (evolution) in a given, chosen direction.[33]

Here it would appear we are very near the concept of natural law. In its classic expression, St Thomas Aquinas claimed that reason, by considering the nature of man and his existence, could provide a framework for right thinking and action. The idea of natural law has recently been under considerable attack because it was assumed that it depended too heavily on the presence of static norms in a Christian society, and that in a world of rapid change and mixed cultures other bases for morality must be found. But the idea of natural law is not dependent completely on such a system. It is enough that there should be general broad principles, 'tacit assumptions'

as H. A. L. Hart calls them, from which it is possible to extrapolate 'natural necessities'.[34] David Jenkins, in some reflections in the W.C.C. study project on 'the Humanum', points in the same direction when he rejects the study of specific problems in favour of relating all study to the question 'what does it mean to be human?'

> No amount of detailed and technical study and analysis can generate what is required to face the human problem of living in a world of which these 'problems' are an ever-changing and influential part. For the processes and problems, which have such technical and sophisticated aspects, create a situation of what might, in contrast, be called ordinary, simple human anxiety and hope, excitement and fear.[35]

Here, then, is another Christian task which is a proper dimension of human ecology - to insist that the real task is to discover beyond the data what are the givens of human existence and what makes 'the proper man'. Or to use Bonhoeffer's question: 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?'

V DEPENDENCE AND PROVIDENCE

One of the insistent notes sounded by those concerned for the future of man in relation to his natural environment is that man is utterly dependent on the resources of this world. If we destroy this our home, there is no other to move to. Here we are and here we stay: so we must make the best of it. The Christian doctrine of creation, or rather of man's createdness, also stresses the notion of dependence. Creation is not primarily a matter of assertions about origins or the beginning of the world, rather it is about God as the source of existence. From the Creator comes the power of being that undergirds and sustains all that is, and the will that confirms the structure and pattern of the creation. So man has this givenness: he exists in relation to the rest of the created cosmos, within the limits prescribed by his nature. That man has real freedom and the ability to push back the boundaries of his knowledge and capabilities does not as an individual or a group take him out of time and space or destroy the need for food, water and air, or break the laws of gravity and relativity. There are limits beyond which man cannot go. Yet the Christian wants to say more than that man has to surrender to bleak resignation. To accept these restrictions from the hand of God as an act of love and relationship is to begin to discover purpose, fulfilment and fulness of life. Here, perhaps, is the proper restraining principle that is needed in a time of restlessness and frantic development. There is an element of rest and freedom from anxiety, and also a desire to develop community and encourage growth to maturity.[36]

Alongside the concept of created dependence, Christian thought has always held the idea of providence. God's creative activity is not random but purposeful, and the

setting for man's existence is part of the loving kindness of the creator. Man's freedom as co-partner with the divine presupposes some kind of providence in history. The Biblical perspective is a process of salvation culminating in the restoration of the fulness of God's kingly rule, whether in terms of 'the Kingdom of the world' becoming 'the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ'[37] or of some supra-historical realm into which the saved are transformed at the close of the present age of this world. The present concern, however, includes the possibility of human self-destruction. It is not enough to say 'God will provide', since the limits of the resources are clearly known if they are over-exploited and destroyed.

It is not that God has not provided. The age old dilemma is: what if the people refuse? This is a constant problem of theodicy for the Jewish prophets.[38] Does this mean that God's purpose is defeated? But that depends on the estimate as to what constitutes defeat. It may be better to have tried and failed than to impose a solution by intervention. Christians must be able, in faith, to understand that the apparent silence is not weakness but self-imposed restraint. The only assurance of hope is not the knowledge of certainty, but the venture of faith that the fulfilment of man's possibilities in creation is attainable and that this above all, even when walking blind and depressed, is the only worthwhile thing.

God is not inactive but will not act to prevent the effects of folly, lest it is assumed that folly is not folly. Yet there is still the constant provision, the inexhaustible supply (if used properly), the incredible richness and variety of the creation (if not destroyed). There are, too, the warnings against wilful greed or criminal neglect. The danger signals are there for those who wish to see. Man still reaps what he has sown, so that the consequences are (not directly but really) signs of the wrath of God. Again, too, there is the constant pressure of the Holy Spirit in the heart and minds of those who are listening and open. God has not and will not leave himself without witness in prophetic action and word, in warning and inspiration. Where there is response there is hope, and signs that the truth is not lost. Nevertheless, the instruments of God's purpose are not limited to those who claim loyalty to Christ, though these have to articulate the signs. It may be that the prophetic pressure of our time is precisely the cry for concern over the natural world, its resources and man's future. The Christian can see this within the setting of Christ, for here is the paradigm of providence. Here can be seen what is possible for man and in man, but it is the path of repentance, death, resurrection and redemption. Conservation, like the Law and, as Clement rightly saw, all human knowledge and experience, is the schoolmaster, the paedagogos, that can lead us to Christ.[39]

This discussion has sought to take up some of the issues posed to man as well as to the Christian community by the

contemporary concern for conservation: the cultural resources; the feeling of crisis; the nature of ecological science; and the concern for the future. It has tried to indicate some of the ways in which Christian thinking and self understanding can relate and perhaps illuminate. Nevertheless, this has not been more than programmatic, suggesting areas of exploration. Indeed, at some points there will be considerable re-appraisal, and elsewhere, *prima facie*, some contradictions would appear. Yet, throughout, one theme has been recurrent: the loving kindness of God in his judgement and mercy and man's opportunity to accept this or reject. Perhaps, therefore, it is fitting to close with two poems which in juxtaposition stress the tension and potential in the situation.

Gerald Manley Hopkins: GOD'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went.

Ah, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

and secondly, the personal psalm of a twelve year old boy:[40]

JUSTICE

Tainted is the ground on which man walks
But sanctified through God's paternal gaze.
The word of man is hate,
Through me he is despised.
'Kill', he cries, 'For ever'.
The lone life form on earth
For he has killed all other;
And many years from now
The men will sigh 'Oh, for the freedom now
That we had had before'.
And God is just -
We have a world and death,
Nature will be no more
And man is doomed for ever.

NOTES

1 In F. G. Healey (ed.), *Prospect for Theology*, Nisbet, 1966, p.131.

2 Quoted in G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan faith and experience* Blackwell, 1946, p.107.

3 K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, E. T. Oxford, 1933,p.425.

4 D. Anderson, *The Tragic Prospect*, SCM, 1969, p.12.

5 This paper was originally given at the William Temple Association summer school, 1971, as part of a symposium on conservation. The balance and emphasis, and perhaps omissions, can be explained by a desire not to duplicate other papers. Something of the complexity of the issues and the necessary theological spadework can be seen in the valuable conference report: D. M. Gill, *From Here to Where?* WCC 1970.

6 e.g. C. F. Weizseecker, *The Relevance of Science*, Collins, 1964. H. Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, Bell, 1957.

7 e.g. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, SCM 1965; A. Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, E.H.P. 1964.

8 This is the general approach found in Robert Arvill, *Man and Environment*, Penguin 1969, p.287; Sir Dudley Stamp, *Nature Conservation in Britian*, Collins, 1969, p.67f.

9 Quoted from *Man in his living environment*, a report by the Board for Social Responsibility, Church Assembly, SPCK 1970, p.56.

10 Max Nicholson, *The Environmental Revolution*, Hodder & Stoughton 1970, p.264f.

11 Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' in J. Barr (ed.), *The Environmental Handbook*, Pan 1971, pp.10-16. Also *Man in his living environment*, p.55f.

12 John Black, *The Dominion of Man*, Edinburgh 1970, p.44. John Black is Professor of Natural Resources.

13 e.g. it has been pointed out that the use of technology in any systematic way was a late 18th and 19th century phenomenon. c.f. Harvey Cox, 'The Responsibility of the Christian in a World of Technology', in Denys Munby, *Economic Growth in World Perspective*, SCM 1966, p.176.

14 C.f. Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, Faber 1969.

15 Robert L. Parkins, *Søren Kierkegaard*, Lutterworth 1969, p.28; also Harvey Cox, *On Not Leaving it to the Snake*, SCM 1968, p.ix-xiv.

16 Genesis 1.26-31, also 2.15-20.
G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol.I, E.T.Oliver and Boyd, 1962, p.144ff.

17 c.f. Man, Doctrine of (W. Hordern) in A. Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, SCM 1969.

18 K. E. Boulding, 'The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth', in Barr, op.cit. See also R. Pucett, *Persons*, Macmillan 1969, chap.3.

19 G. Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', in Barr, op.cit.

20 c.f. Nicholson, op.cit., p.14ff. Though this is countered by Black, op.cit., chap.1 and p.127ff.

21 P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Man's Place in Nature*, E.T.Collins, 1966, chap.V. Also *The Phenomenon of Man*, E.T.Collins, 1959, Book Four: *The Future of Man*, E.T.Collins, 1964.

22 Ephesians 1.10.

23 C.f. O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, E.T. SCM 1951, *Salvation in History*, .E.T SCM 1967. John Marsh, 'Time' in A. Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, SCM 1950.

24 C.f. the emphasis on hope, revolution and the future in theology; e.g. J. Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope*, E.T. SCM 1967, and Harvey Cox, *God's revolution and man's responsibility*, SCM 1969.

25 C.f. e.g. for international suspicion *From Here to Where?* p.25, 35; for conflict in this country *'The Countryside in 1970', Proceedings of the 3rd Conference, October 1970*, Royal Society of Arts 1970, especially sections I-III. Also the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, *First Report*, HMSO 1971, which gives an excellent summary of the total problem.

26 A. van den Heuvel, *These Rebellious Powers*, SCM 1966.

27 Reported in *Voyage*, May-June 1971, bulletin of the British Council of Churches, p.7.

28 Chas. Fager, 'Experimenting with a simpler style of life', *Christian Century*, 6/1/1971.

29 Thomas K. Hearn Jr., 'Jesus was a sissy after all', *Christian Century*, 7/10/1970.

30 Stressed by Black, op.cit., pp.139 ff.

31 Ian G. Barbour, *Science and Religion*, SCM 1968, p.27. C.f. Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future*, SCM 1970; L. C. Birch, *Nature and God*, SCM 1965; Sir Alister Hardy, *The Living Stream* and *The Divine Flame*, Collins, 1965-6.

32 David Jenkins, *What is man?*, SCM 1970, pp.20ff and 49ff, to which this section is indebted. The ethological debate is represented e.g. on one side by K. Lorenz, *King Solomon's Ring*, and Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape*; and on the other M. Ashley, *Man and Aggression*, B. Towers and J. Lewis, *Naked Ape or Homo Sapiens?*

33 C.f. Black, op.cit., chap.9, points out that change is inevitable. K. Allsop, 'Introduction' in Barr, op.cit., poses the problem of adaptability with a horror story 'that the human race is also producing a mutant carp which can live off poison'.

34 Ian T. Ramsey, 'Towards a rehabilitation of natural law' in *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, SCM 1966.

35 David Jenkins, 'Questions for study within the concern for the study of man', in *Study Encounter*, 6-4-1970.

36 J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, SCM 1966, chap.X.

37 Revelation 5.15.

38 e.g. Ezekiel 18.

39 Galatians 3.27. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I.v.28 '... philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness, until the coming of the Lord. And now it assists towards true religion as a kind of preparatory training...' (E.T. H. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, p.8f).

40 From R. Hearn, *Modern Psalms by Boys*, London U.P., 1965.

The considerable discussions related to ecology in the W.C.C. study on Faith, Science and the Future came to a climax at the conference at M.I.T., Cambridge, U.S.A., in July 1979. There is considerable documentation in (i) *Anticipation*, the occasional journal of the Division of Church and Society; (ii) Paul Abrecht, *Faith, Science and the Future*, WCC 1978, the preparatory document; (iii) Roger Shinn and Paul Abrecht, *Faith and Science in an Unjust World*, WCC 1980, two volumes of reports.

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RECENTLY RESTORED CHAPELS

Society members will be interested to hear that the Goodshaw Baptist Chapel, Crawshawbooth, Rawtenstall, Lancs, has now been restored. It is open to the public and is in the hands of a private trust. It can be visited by appointment. Details of whom to contact are available from Revd John Nicholson, Northern Baptist College, Manchester. This is a fine addition to the small number of such chapels which are open to the public, such as Loughwood, near Kilmington, Devon; and the Tewkesbury Chapel, in Tewkesbury, Glos. Another chapel recently restored in the north is the Brassey Green Chapel, in Cheshire, which is just back from the road which connects Tiverton and Huxley. Mrs M. F. Thomas published in April a fine history of Brassey Green and Tarporley (see *Baptist Quarterly* October 1984).

CHAPEL RECORDS

In the spring the Society launched a survey of chapel records with the help of the Baptist Union. So far about 400 churches have responded. Hopefully many more will. Members might like to make sure their own churches have returned the survey to the Baptist Union.

The intention is to provide an up to date account of where records are kept. All too many are still in the hands of church officers, when they ought to be in the local Record Office. The East Midlands Association has been encouraging this for a number of years. Other Associations could well follow suit.