cluding human designs that we believe may be part of a divine design, contain many risks. There are many in both our churches who profoundly distrust the present dialogue. Even those Lutherans who acknowledge the significant changes in Rome wonder how permanent or secure those changes may be. Would not ecclesial reconciliation be writing a blank check? Is it not possible that some day, despite all present professions and even the restructuring of the papacy, some other pope will exercise his authority in a Gospel-denying manner? As the subscribers to the *Treatise* thought was the case in their time, may not a pope once again bear "the marks of the Antichrist"? It is difficult to envision this happening in a reconciled Church of partner churches, but it is even more difficult to rule out the possibility. In that tragic event, a new Reformation might be launched, and then there might be a new schism, and then five hundred years from now there may be others who will pray and work for the healing of the breach of, say, the twenty-third century.

But to be obsessed by these doleful possibilities is both unfruitful and unfaithful. The negations of the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* are to be interpreted by the affirmations of the subscribers. In subscribing, they once again indicate the preeminence of the *Augustana* and its *Apology* in our confessional movement. "Nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic." Certainly it has not been received as doctrine among us that the papacy is inherently and forever the Antichrist, for such a doctrine is without scriptural warrant and is patently contrary to the catholic tradition. What confessional Lutherans have received is a singular passion for the Gospel which, by the grace of God, may in our day be proclaimed and protected by a papacy that is renewed and reformed under the Gospel. If that is a contemporary possibility, then the pursuit of that possibility is a confessional imperative.

Notes

1. *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility,* Fortress/Paulist, 1985.
2. Ibid. p. 82.
3. *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church,* Augsburg, 1974.
4. While preparing this paper, I was reviewing John Paul II's *The Way to Christ* (Harper and Row) and was struck in particular by his treatment of "the sacrament of forgiveness." "Christ knew the meaning of what he did, the actions of his life and his message. And when he said, 'It is finished,' he was referring to the fulfillment of the work of human redemption. The mystery of human justification before God . . . is enclosed in that work." Had this been the papacy's understanding of penance in 1517, I dare say there would have been no occasion for the *95 Theses.* The above statement is by no means atypical, as becomes evident in any representative reading of John Paul's writings. For a detailed analysis of his understanding of the Christian mystery, see George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II,* Seabury, 1981.
5. Rusch in the introduction to *Unity of the Churches.*
6. Quoted in *Unity of the Churches,* p. 70.
7. For a useful overview of dialogue and other developments to date, see *What Are They Saying About Papal Primacy,* by J. Michael Miller, Paulist, 1983.

TOWARD A NEW THEOLOGY OF NATURE

*By H. Paul Santmire**

The current discussion of the theology of nature is more than two decades old. Its public history began in 1961, with the contributions of two Chicago theologians, Joseph Sittler and Langdon Gilkey.

In an address to the World Council of Churches meeting in New Delhi,[1] Sittler drew on a previously little-noticed 1951 study by the English theologian Allan D. Galloway, titled *The Cosmic Christ,*[2] to urge the churches of the world to develop a "cosmic christology" that would lift up the image of Christ as Savior of the whole universe, not only of the church and humanity. Without such a christology, Sittler maintained, the church would not be able to confront the challenge of the global environmental crisis, in particular, or the threat of modern alienation from nature, in general.

In two related articles, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language" (1961)[3] and "The Concept of Providence in Contemporary Theology," (1963)[4] Gilkey addressed himself specifically to what he diagnosed as internal stresses and strains within the dominant modes of theological reflection at the time. He was particularly concerned with the meaning of the then widely highlighted theological theme, "the mighty acts of God in history." "A God who is neither the Creator nor the Ruler of nature," he explained, "becomes an alien intruder into temporal history. The result inevitably is that his 'mighty acts' in actual history dissolve, and what is left of his action is a mere inward influence which leads man, as in modern secular existentialism, to make decisions in an alien, meaningless world, and to have 'faith' in a God who is sovereign only elsewhere."[5]

*Grace Lutheran Church, Hartford, Connecticut.

It would be a mistake to say that the ensuing discussion of the theology of nature, beyond those initial contributions by Sittler and Gilkey, has gone nowhere. But, as anyone familiar with the discussion knows, it has been uncertain and episodic at best. After more than 20 book-length studies and scores of articles directed to the topic, one can justly ask what has really been said.[6] It is symptomatic of the disjointed state of the discussion that books and articles continue to appear under the rubic "Toward a New Theology of Nature" which show little or no acquaintance with the fact that a significant international discussion has been underway for 20 years.[7]

Has it all been for naught? Is perhaps the theology of nature a kind of theological dead-end? Was the whole discussion perchance what some of its critics suspected from the start, a passing theological fad?

I believe that the concerns which Sittler and Gilkey first articulated are still valid and are perhaps even more pressing than they were two decades ago. But the time has come to take a reading of the whole discussion in order to determine what the impasse is which keeps it so involuted and, often, convoluted, and which, therefore, restricts its impact on the general course of the theological discussion in our time. To this end, I want to review what can be called "the received theological wisdom," on the one hand, and the theology of the "reconstructionists" and the "revisionists" on the other, as the propaedeutic for a simple proposal which I believe can help move the discussion of the theology of nature beyond its present impasse.

I.

The received wisdom concerning the theology of nature was given perhaps its most lucid systematic and ethical statement by Thomas Derr in his 1973 study *Ecology and Human Need.*[8] Derr argues that "the Biblical view of man's relation to nature is . . . definitely anthropocentric, but devoid of false confidence in the results of man's mastery."[9] Nature, for Derr, accordingly, is "a complement to the primary drama of redemption which takes place in history."[10] On this basis, Derr then develops the now familiar ethical theme: responsible stewardship or mastery over the earth.

Derr's book is representative in a number of ways. It stands firmly within the mainstream of 20th-century European theology, as far as the theology of nature is concerned. Karl Barth thought of theology specifically as "the-anthropology," as a confession and exposition of God's special relationship with the human creature.[11] However much he may have differed from Barth in other respects, Rudolf Bultmann was thoroughly in accord with his great opponent from Basel in this one respect. Barth argued that there can be no such thing as a "Christian theology of nature," but only a doctrine of God graciously entering into communion with the human creature. Bultmann rigorously argued that generalizing statements about God's activity in nature are illegitimate. Theology has to do, he maintained, only with the concrete personal relationship between God and humans.[12]

Derr's book is also representative of discussions about the theology of nature within World Coucil of Churches circles during the last ten years. His book was first published, indeed, as a cooperative venture of the World Student Christian Federation and the World Council. There the theme "theology and human history" has been a dominant concern for more than two decades.[13] The theology of nature has been addressed, but chiefly within the framework of the theology of history, understood the-anthropocentrically.[14]

The kind of argument that Derr develops, with both systematic and ethical interests, has also been projected forcefully by Gordon Kaufman, from the vantage of fundamental theology.[15] Kaufman maintains that the great words of the Christian vocabulary—sin, salvation, forgiveness, repentance, hope, faith, love, righteousness—have to do primarily with humanity and relationships among humans. He assets that the rest of the creation (with the exception of the angels), though always recognized and sometimes acknowledged, "never became the subject of any technical theological vocabulary or doctrines."[16]

Then Kaufman arrives at his systematic point: "An inner logic or consistency in Western religious traditions was being worked out here."[17] The ultimate reality with which humanity had to do was understood primarily as "a personal and moral agent who required of his devotees not only absolute devotion but also moral rectitude."[18] Accordingly, the moral side of human existence—willing and doing—was given the most profound kind of metaphysical sanction possible. "Thus," Kaufman explains, "both man and that which was taken to be ultimately real were understood in terms of those features of man's being which most sharply distinguish us from other creatures, namely, the abilities to act, to decide, to order behavior by reference to preconceived and deliberately chosen ends, to devote ourselves to such values as righteousness, mercy, and love."[19]

It follows from this inner logic of the Christian faith, Kaufman concludes, that the natural world is of "an ontologically different order from man." Human creatures are "lifted far above the rest of nature" by their moral and personal character. Therefore, "nature is not conceived primarily as man's proper home and the very source of his being, but rather as the context of and material for teleological activity by the (non-natural) wills working upon it."[20]

Kaufman allows that the picture of Christian belief he presents here is overdrawn. Still, he emphasizes that "the theological problem of nature is not simply one of rearranging emphasses or details, lifting up certain motifs in the tradition that may have been neglected. It goes far deeper than that, into the logic of the central concepts of our religious tradition." Thus, he notes, the very concept of God itself, as it has been developed in the West, "has built into it a depreciation of the metaphysical, and certainly the religious, significance of nature." Any theological reconstruction, therefore, will have to go down to "the deepest roots of Western religious sensibility and vocabulary."[21]

With these formidable statements of the received theological wisdom by Derr and Kaufman before us, it is easy to see why those who have sought to develop a new theology of nature in our time have often preceived themselves to be on the defensive.[22] But the effort has been made, and with some success.

II.

Perhaps the most sustained attempt to develop a new theology of nature in recent years has been the work of the reconstructionists, above all those theologians, such as John Cobb and Charles Birch, who are influenced by the process thought of Alfred North Whitehead.[23] Although Cobb's work is substantial, Birch, an Australian biologist and theologian has been the most vocal international theological figure in this context. Birch's two addresses to the World Council of Churches, first in Kenya in 1975 and then to the Conference on Faith, Science, and the Future, in the United States in 1979, represent the most public and, in many ways, the most illustrative example of this particular theological trend.[25]

Birch seeks to develop what he calls an "ecological view of nature," drawing on the insights of Whitehead and his students. This view highlights the subjectivity of all things: "Mind is no longer just in a corner of nature. It is part of all nature."[26] This means that the whole universe is a feeling universe. This means that one can know the universe from within, as well as externally or objectively.

The ecological view of nature also democratizes the ordering forces of the universe, according to Birch. "There are many creators," he explains, "for all created entities have a degree of freedom to respond appropriately or not."[27] God is preeminant among these powers, to be sure, but God is not in complete control of the events of the world. God, as Whitehead memorably suggested, is not that heavenly despot, omniscient and omnipotent, who is akin to Persian emperors. Rather, God is the one who is disclosed in the self-giving life of the Galilean, Jesus. God is not the deity of absolute power, but the God of love. Thus God, according to this way of thinking, does not absolutely order the world, but rather "persuades" or "lures" it to fulfill the undergirding Divine purposes.

This Whiteheadian angle of vision presents us with an image of a cosmos which is evolving everywhere, through the providential persuasion of God. The world is a kind of organism, notwithstanding its vast diversity. It has a soul, or rather a multiplicity of subjective centers which have their own integrity, yet which are open to influence from the lure of God, the Creator.

On the basis of this ecological view of nature, Birch then develops an ethic predicated on the idea that nature has intrinsic rights. This turns out to be an ethic of respect rather than an ethic of mastery. Nature has rights, he avers, because of its own subjectivity. There is a hierarchy of value, to be sure, culminating in human life. Humanity is worth more than the sparrows, and so on. Nevertheless, "Whatever has intrinsic value has some right to exist and prosper."[28]

These are the essentials of Birch's position. His approach, and the approach of the process school which he represents, is a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the modern Christian framework for interpreting nature, that is, the received theological wisdom.

III.

But Birch's argument, in retrospect, notwithstanding its many strengths, seems to be built on unstable, if not altogether untenable, historical

foundations. This is perhaps its single most serious liability.

Birch characteristically begins with general cultural and metaphysical issues and then moves to reinterpret particular theological doctrines. Like process theologians generally, he is, in this respect, primarily a "philosophical theologian." He begins with the global reality of the environmental crisis and with the sweeping claims of Whiteheadian philosophy, then attempts to posit a new theology of nature, drawing on—and often radically reinterpreting—classical Christian symbols such as God, creation, and providence along the way. In his thought, the particulars of the church's classical theological confessions are thus shaped, self-consciously, by the demands of relevance to contemporary experience and by the overall framework of process thought.

This question arises, then: How much is this new theological approach to nature an expression of the biblical-classical tradition and how much is it more an invention, as it were, fashioned from Whiteheadian thought? This is precisely the kind of question Gordon Kaufman has raised, at least by implication, and raised so forcefully. The response of process thinkers, such as Birch, is predictable: that they *have* gone down to the deepest roots of Western sensibility and vocabulary in developing their new theology of nature. And such a response could be well-defended.

The process approach to God is a case in point. Process thinkers have radically reshaped the image of God so that God is no longer primarily the moral will, the one who acts by omnipotent fiat and who is described best by analogies from moral experience. They have introduced affective images (such as "enjoyment") and organic metaphors (above all "process") into their doctrine of God. Hence it is not contrary to the inner logic of their doctrine of God to see God as one who is creatively and affectively—as well as effectually—involved in nature and, indeed, fundamentally akin to nature. Further, process thinkers richly correlate the idea of God—as one who persuades and suffers with all creatures—with biblical images of Jesus himself as the Suffering Servant.

Still, the contrast between Kaufman's picture of Christian thought throughout the ages and the theology of the Whiteheadian reconstructionists is striking. Most of the key themes in their theology of nature, if not all of them, appear to be totally new in the Christian tradition: the subjectivity of all things; the limited, persuasive character of God's power; the universal evolution of all things; the rights of nature. This brings us face to face with the sharpness of the question posed above. Have the process theologians actually gone down to "the deepest roots of Western religious sensibility and vocabulary"? Or have they, rather, imported a totally new religious sensibility and vocabulary in order to deal with what is apparently a crisis in Western Christian thought?

Process theologians, of course, are not aware of questions such as these. Indeed, *novelty* for them generally is not a problem, but a virtue. They hold, more particularly, that conscious religious beliefs should correspond with what they call "the pre-reflective beliefs involved in our primordial experience."[29] Christian doctrines, then, are thought of as "relatively adequate explications of truths that are universally apprehended at the pre-conscious level of experience." These doctrines "lift into importance a selection of the myriad precognitive apprehensions." This means that there are other precognitive apprehensions of reality that still need to be expressed in theological reflection, according to this point of view. "In fact," we are told, "Christian faith requires this self-universalizing, once the real possibility for it is present."[30] Presumably the rise of the environmental crisis, then, and the critical light that that crisis has reflected on the previous 1900 years of Christian theological reflection about nature, could be judged to be one such possibility for self-universalizing. This would be akin to the encounter with other religions in our century, which is also an important theme for many process theologians: "We believe that it is possible for faith to broaden and enrich itself in this way [through the encounter with other religions] without losing its Christian character, and that this is desireable."[31]

This kind of response to the questions raised about the apparent novelty of the process theology of nature surely has its own integrity and its own inner consistency. But it seems obvious that the cause of the process theologians would be markedly strengthened, not only apologetically but also within the Christian community, if its *Christian character* were more firmly identified with the concrete theological stuff of the Christian tradition and were not solely or mainly dependent on the formal principle of self-universalization, as it seems to be. This, then, is the problematic for those process theologians who would attempt to reconstruct Christian thought about nature: the need for surer historical foundations.

IV.

The challenge of greater historical understanding also arises, indeed much more urgently, when

we consider the possibility of developing a new approach to nature with the methodology of a more "confessional" kind of theology. This is the approach championed by "the revisionists," above all by Joseph Sittler in a programmatic way in his aforementioned essay, "Called to Unity," and then more fully in his 1972 volume, *Essays on Nature and Grace.*[32] I have also contributed to the discussion in this connection, especially with my 1970 study. *Brother Earth: Nature, God, and Ecology in a Time of Crisis.*[33] Sittler's volume and my own are written from a confessional perspective. Both attempt to place themselves firmly within the normative biblical-classical tradition of theology—Sittler's as that tradition is mediated through the symbols of classical christology and the theology of grace, mine as the tradition comes to expression in the creation theology of Luther and Calvin.[34] But both seem to be lacking precisely at this point. In the end, notwithstanding serious efforts to explore biblical and classical roots, it is not fully clear whether these confessional revisions of the tradition are as fully rooted in the tradition as their authors would like to think. (Sittler's use of Colossians 1:15ff. in behalf of his "cosmic Christology," for example, has been hotly contested.) This is a serious situation, from the vantage point of the very confessional methodology which these revisionist volumes are attempting to employ.

For confessional theology, theological reflection is understood not fundamentally as a particular explication of "truths that are universally apprehended at the preconscious level of experience," but rather as a reflective exposition of the revealed Word of God; not as a movement of thought from the general to the particular, but rather as a movement of faith from the particular to the general. For confessional theologians generally, the Reformation principle *sola scriptura* is still very much alive. If a doctrice cannot be constructed on some particular biblical foundation, or if it cannot be shown to be congruent with the teachings of the Scriptures through its attestation by the tradition, then it has no sure and certain Christian character. Hence, for any confessional theologian who wants to develop a theology of nature, the historical question, so sharply defined by Kaufman, must be a matter of great concern. If one looks down "to the deepest [sources] of Western sensibility and vocabulary," into the Bible and also into the tradition of the church as that gives expression to biblical faith, and finds that, as far as a theology of nature is concerned, the well is empty, then, from the vantage of confessional theologians, the well *is* empty and will remain so.

The discussion between the philosophically oriented process theologians and the biblically oriented confessional theologians about theological method is not one, clearly, which can or should be pursued here. We can and must, however, turn forthwith to the historical question, since that is clearly a major problematic of the theology of nature today, no matter whether one's theological methodology is reconstructionist-philosophical or revisionist-confessional.[35]

V.

Until very recently the proposal for a fresh approach to the biblical-classical theology of nature would have been laughed out of court by many, if not all, interpreters of the tradition. The last word had been spoken, or so it seemed: the Bible and the classical theological tradition "at its best" (that is, when it has been faithful to the Bible) clearly stand for a theology which focuses on God's saving history with humanity; nature, in turn, is the stage or the backdrop for that saving history.

That, more or less, was the common assumption of a wide-ranging group of interpreters of the biblical-classical tradition: G. Ernest Wright and Gerhard von Rad in Old Testament studies; Rudolf Bultmann and Oscar Cullmann in New Testament studies; many historians of the classical tradition (Johannes Metz went to great lengths to argue, for example, that Thomas Aquinas turned his back on a cosmocentric "Greek" perspective, in favor of an historical-anthropocentric "biblical" perspective), especially historians of the Reformation tradition, where, it was widely assumed, the the-anthropocentric concern with justification by faith and Divine Grace implied that all theological concern with nature had to be secondary, irrelevant, or even dangerous. It was no wonder, then, that the received theological wisdom about nature, as we have seen it expressed in the systematic and ethical arguments of Derr and in the fundamental theological reflections of Kaufman, could be so firmly established in the minds of so many. Everyone knew, or so it seemed, that the biblical-classical theological tradition was in fact the-anthropocentric and that it had little or no theological concern for nature in itself.

But it now appears that the last word about the biblical-classical tradition's approach to the theology of nature has yet to be spoken. To begin with, the hegemony of the "biblical theology movement," which flourished at mid-century and beyond, has begun to give way.[36] This means that the integrating theme of the biblical theology

movement, "the mighty acts of God in history," can no longer be taken to be *the* self-evident hermeneutical key for biblical interpretation. This shift of historical perspective also has the more general effect of opening up an approach to biblical theology that has a place for the purposes and the activities of God in the processes of nature, as well as in the events of human history.

More specifically, it is becoming increasingly apparent that much Christian interpretation of the Old Testament has been too narrowly focused on God and the people Israel, to the neglect of the *land*. Walter Brueggeman has attempted to redress this imbalance with a study of "the land" which has far-reaching implications for our understanding of biblical theology in general and the biblical theology of nature in particular.[37] "It will no longer do to talk about Yahweh and his people," he states categorically, "but we must speak about Yahweh and his people *and his land*."[38] Land, Brueggeman tells us, is a central, if not *the* central theme of the whole Old Testament.[39] "Preoccupation with existentialist *decisions* and transforming *events*," he concludes, "has distracted us from seeing that this God is committed to this land and that his promise for his people is always his land."[40]

In a similar vein, Claus Westermann has studied the theology of blessing in the Old Testament, with suggestive results.[41] Westermann argues that *two* themes stand side by side throughout the Bible, neither of which may be properly subsumed under, or derived from, the other: deliverance and blessing. He explains:

> When the Bible speaks of God's contact with mankind, his blessing is there alongside his deliverance. History comes into being only when both are there together. The element of contingency, essential to historical events, enters the biblical history through the presence together of God's activity in saving and blessing and through their effect on each other.[42]

In Westermann's view, therefore, "no concept of history that excludes or ignores God's activity in the world of nature can adequately reflect what occurs in the Old Testament between God and his people."[43]

New Testament studies have witnessed a marked realignment in recent years, especially around the question of the meaning of apocalypticism. Bultmann and many other interpreters had sought a way to find the "essential core" in New Testament apocalyptic. Bultmann accordingly interpreted apocalyptic, as a matter of course, in the anthropocentric terms of human self-understanding. The work of Ernst Käsemann makes that singleminded demythologizing approach to New Testament apocalyptic much less tenable.[44]

The implications of this apocalyptic reading of New Testament theology for our understanding of New Testament thought about nature have yet to be fully explored. But the promise of new discoveries is apparent. "Cosmic renewal," that is, the vision of a "new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells," may well have the same kind of centrality in New Testament theology as "the land of promise" has, it now appears, in Old Testament theology.

In his stunning study of Paul's theology, J. Christiaan Beker has drawn out some of these implications.[45] Whereas Barth and Bultmann, among many others, had interpreted Paul's vision of the whole creation groaning in travail (Romans 8:19ff.) as a marginal Pauline concern (with, indeed, the word "creation" itself referring chiefly to the *human* creation), Beker argues that this text is a key to the entire corpus of Paul's thought. Further, Beker maintains that the habit of more than a few New Testament interpreters of juxtaposing and contrasting Paul's concern with justification by faith over against his "cosmic" interests is fundamentally faulty. To do so, says Beker, is to misinterpret the Apostle's thought and also to miss its full relevance to our situation today. He writes:

> The collapse of apocalypticism into christology or anthropology causes a disorientation of Paul's proclamation of the resurrection, which has grave consequences for Paul's thought. Individualism and spiritualization—if not ecclesiastical self-aggrandizement—are the inevitable results of such an interpretation. Moreover, the neglect of Paul's apocalyptic thought leads to a neglect of both his anthropology and his ecclesiology, for the somatic worldly component of his anthropology cannot be spiritualized away . . . Paul's church is not an aggregate of justified sinners or a sacramental institute or a means for private self-sanctification, but the avante garde of the new creation in a hostile world, creating beachheads in this world of God's dawning new world and yearning for the day of God's visible Lordship over his creation . . .[46]

A glimpse at these developments in contemporary biblical studies, especially the emergence of the theology of "the land" in Old Testament research and the reaffirmation of the apparently similarly significant theology of "the new heavens and the new earth" in New Testament research, should show that the singleminded the-anthropocentric reading of the Bible by Derr and many others who espouse the received theological wisdom is no longer tenable. A more adequate reading of biblical theology would seem to require what can be called an ecological hermeneutic of history, a framework of interpretation that takes God, humanity, *and* nature ("the land" or "the earth"), not just the first two, as the central theological constructs or the defining theological matrix of biblical thinking.

Similar kinds of discoveries are forthcoming when we look at the post-biblical theological tradition. Here Augustine can be instanced as a case in

point, as I have shown elsewhere.[47] Surprising as this may sound to some, Augustine's *mature* thought does *not* reflect the perspective of the received theological wisdom concerning nature at practically any substantive point. For this reason, Kaufman's analysis of the tradition is more or less irrelevant when we compare it to Augustine's mature theology of nature.

From the perspective of fundamental theology, Augustine's thought is replete with a wealth of metaphorical and conceptual forms and an abundance of concrete, even passionate, interest in nature, all of which make it possible for him to develop, as a matter of course, a formally and materially rich theology of nature. Yes, Augustine is the *doctor gratiae,* and his writings full of technical discourse about sin and grace. But that does not prohibit him from also developing a rich vocabulary and self-consciously construed doctrines about the world of nature (for example, his doctrine of "the seminal reasons" in the world of nature). Nor does Augustine devalue nature systematically; rather he affirms nature consistently in a sometimes extravagant fashion, with a pervasive accent on tyhe overflowing goodness of God. Likewise, because his God is more akin to the world-affirming deity of Plato's *Timaeus* and the God of universal blessings confessed by the Psalmist (e.g., Psalm 104), than the world-transcending, even world-denying, deity of some forms of Neoplatonism (and, later, Kantianism), he does not define God in a way that depreciates nature metaphysically. On the contrary, his God, by definition, embraces nature; and nature, in turn, participates in God at every level. Further, Augustine envisions a contemplative relationship between humans and nature (the accent on teleological "dominion over" or domination is completely missing) and holds that the world of nature as we know it now is not fallen, but beautiful and good, as it constantly is blessed by the goodness of God. Finally, Augustine picks up and affirms the New Testament expectation of a future transformation and renewal of the whole cosmos on the Last Day, when God will be all in all.

These brief glimpses at the biblical-classical tradition should not be read as an historical argument in favor of what can be called the ecological promise of the biblical-classical theology of the West.[48] But they should show that the pervasive reading of the tradition's theology in terms of human salvation-history alone, as that has been championed by such proponents of the received theological wisdom as Derr and Kaufman, and behind them by thinkers such as Barth and Bultmann, has not provided us with the whole truth, by any means.

VI.

After more than two decades of less than satisfying theological discussions, therefore, the way to a more compelling "new theology of nature" appears to be open, precisely because new possibilities for interpreting the "old theology of nature" seem to be emerging, in both biblical studies and the history of Christian thought. What is needed seems to be possible. It remains for those interested in the theology of nature to pursue the meanings in those emergent possibilities with imagination and rigor.[49]

Notes

1. Joseph Sittler, "Called to Unity," *The Ecumenical Review* 14 (1961-62), pp. 177-87.
2. Allan D. Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).
3. Langdon Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *Journal of Religion* 41 (1961), pp. 194ff.
4. *Idem,* "The Concept of Providence in Contemporary Theology," *Journal of Religion* 43 (1963), pp. 171ff.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 185.
6. It would be a valuable service if some institution or individual would agree to underwrite the publication of an annotated bibliography of these numerous works.
7. The most recent example of these "lone ranger" type of studies are George S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) and John Carmody, *Ecology and Religion: Toward a New Christian Theology of Nature* (New York: Paulist, 1983).
8. Thomas Sieger Derr, *Ecology and Human Need* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975). See my review article: H. Paul Santmire, "Ecology and Ethical Ecumenics," *Anglican Theological Review* 59 (1977), pp. 98ff.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 17.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 23.
11. For a study of Barth's theology of nature, see my dissertation: H. Paul Santmier, *Creation and Nature: A Study in the Theology of Nature With Special Reference to Karl Barth's Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, March 1966).
12. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribners, 1958), especially pp. 64, 69, 70, 85.
13. This preoccupation with the theme of meaning in history—understandable after the shaking events of World War II—was evident since the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. It was still to the fore more than a decade later at New Delhi—where Sittler gave his address calling for a cosmic christology—when the Council voted that its focus for study during the Nineteen Sixties would be the theme God's work in history. See C. T. McIntire, ed. *God, History, and Historians: Modern Christian Views of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Introduction, pp. 3-27.
14. See G. W. H. Lampe, "The New Testament Doctrine of *Krisis,*" *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 17, (1964), pp. 449ff.; Paul Endokimov, "Nature," *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 18

(1965), pp. 1ff.; Hendrikus Berkof, "God in Nature and History," reprinted in McIntire, *op. cit.* The work by the orthodox theologian, Paulos Gregorios, *The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature* (Geneva: the World Council of Churches, s1978), can also be thought of in this context, although he aschews the modern Western preoccupation with theology and history in favor of a more traditional Eastern ontological approach. Gregorios' work, which was given the place of a major World Council of Churches' document, as was Derr's, finally comes to rest within the same orbit as Derr's work, because of its anthropocentrism. For Gregorios, as the title of his book indicates, both ontologically and ethically speaking, nature stands or falls with the human presence. Nature's being depends on human being for its reality, according to Gregorios; and, although he wants to distance himself from the ethic of stewardship, he finally ends up by espousing an ethic of mastery over nature similar to Derr's.

15. Gordon Kaufman, "A Problem for Theology: the Concept of Nature," *Harvard Theological Review* 65 (1972), pp. 337ff.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 352.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
22. The development of a wide-ranging discussion of the theology of nature was also inhibited by other factors, as was discussion of the doctrine of creation more generally. See my article: H. Paul Santmire, "Studying the Doctrine of Creation: the Challenge." *dialog* 21 (1982), pp. 195ff.
23. See especially: John Cobb, *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* Beverly Hills, California: Bruce, 1972).
24. For an evaluation of Cobb's contribution, see Claude Stewart, *Nature in Grace: A Study in the Theology of Nature,* Harvard Divinity School Doctoral Dissertation (Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 1980).
25. Charles Birch, "Nature, Humanity and God in Ecological Perspective," in *Faith and Science in an Unjust World,* Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on Faith, Science, and the Future, vol. 1: Plenary Presentations, ed. Roger L. Shinn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), pp. 62ff.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
29. John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffen, *Process Theology: an Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), p. 34.
30. *Ibid.*, p.37.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Joseph Sittler, *Essays on Nature and Grace* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).
33. H. Paul Santmire, *Brother Earth: Nature, God, and Ecology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1970).
34. For one estimate of Sittler's work, see Nathan A. Scott. Jr., "The Poetry and Theology of Earth: Reflections on the Testimony of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Joseph Sittler," *Journal of Religion* 54 (1975), pp. 102ff. The same issue also contains a bibliography of Sittler's works. My own works have been subjected to critical scrutiny by Derr, *op. cit.*, pp. 36f. and by Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-135.
35. This is not to argue that the historical question is the only prolematic area in recent discussions of the theology of nature. Claude Stewart, *op. cit.*, has argued that certain meta-theological issues are also at stake, above all the question concerning the appropriate model for theological reflection about nature.
36. See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), and the literature he cites, especially the works by James Barr. See also Barr's more recent summary, "Biblical Theology," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Supplementary Volume (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), s.v.
37. Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge, in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).
38. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
41. Claus Westermann, *Blessing: In the Bible and the Life of the Church,* tr. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).
42. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
44. See Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," *New Testament Questions of Today,* tr. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp. 82ff.
45. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: the Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).
46. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
47. H. Paul Santmire, "St. Augustine's Theology of the Biophysical World," *Ecological Consciousness,* Essays from the Earthday X Colloquium, University of Denver, April 21-24, 1980, ed. Robert C. Schultz, J. Donald Hughes (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), chapter 5.
48. I discuss this promise at length, however, in my forthcoming volume, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).
49. The historical study of Christian thought about nature is noticeably limited. Some descriptive study has been done on Western attitudes toward nature generally, including religious attitudes, by Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought From Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). Galloway, *op. cit.,* has traced the theme of cosmic redemption from biblical times to the twentieth century. Leo Scheffczyk has studied the history of the doctrine of creation (with little attention to the theology of nature, as such, ironically), *Creation and Providence,* tr. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971). George Williams has followed the history of the wilderness and paradise motif, from biblical times to the present, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). A few articles about the biblical theology of nature have been published, almost all of them reflecting the perspective of what I have called the received theological wisdom about the theology of nature; see especially Lampe, *op. cit.* Perhaps the most illuminating material on our theme comes from the research of George H. Williams in the form of a long two-part essay, "Christian Attitudes Toward Nature," *Christian Scholars Review* 2 (Fall 1971, Winter 1972), pp. 3ff., 112ff. But this work, as we might expect, is limited in scope. I have made an attempt to begin the work of fresh interpretation I am calling for here in the study referred to in the preceding note. It reviews the thought of Irenaeus and Origen; Augustine; Bonaventure and Francis; Luther and Calvin; Barth and Teilhard; among others. It concludes with the outline of a fresh approach to the biblical theology of nature (developing themes only touched on in this article).