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Title Of Manuscript ENVIRONMENT AND HUMANITY: HEBRAIC- CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Contributor H. Paul Santmire, A.B., B.D., Th.D.
please print

Title Chaplain and Lecturer in Religion, Wellesley College

Address Wellesley College
Wellesley, Mass. 02181

Mailing Address*

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*Please inform us if you anticipate any change in address

ENVIRONMENT AND HUMANITY: HEBRAIC-CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

"Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians," the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach wrote scornfully in the middle of the nineteenth century. "The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul." Such a condemnation of the Western theological tradition has become familiar by the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, however, Hebraic-Christian attitudes toward nature have been much more complex -- and much more interesting — than Feuerbach and his latter day followers have generally imagined.

To say anything helpful about a richly variegated religious tradition that spans millenia and has been shaped by radically different host cultures, Ancient Near Eastern, Greco-Roman, Medieval, and Modern, one must be satisfied with what can at best be a tentatively suggestive illustration of major trends. Martin Buber gave currency to the phrase "biblical humanism." Karl Barth wrote a famous essay entitled "The Humanity of God." This motif, theological humanism, is a good point of departure for our historical survey. The Hebraic-Christian tradition, whatever else it may be, is the story of a historical movement which has consistently

highlighted God's relationship with human beings as the constituing center of meaning and value. Over the last three millenia this theological humanism has been articulated and enacted in a profusion of forms. We can tentatively identify two major trends within that diversity of expression.

On the one hand, the tradition has sometimes been holistic. It has evinced a profound sense for the human creature's universal interconnectedness with God, with the entire cosmos, and with the whole human family, as well as giving testimony to the fabric of mutuality that sustains the particular community that carries the tradition. It has seen all things, particularly natural things, as well as human affairs, moving in the historical flow of the universal Divine Economy.

On the other hand, the tradition has frequently seemed to be insular in significant ways, even rankly anthropocentric, especially over against the world of nature. It has tended to become anthropologically exclusivistic. It has emphasized a marked disjunction, sometimes a radical break, between God and humanity on the one side, and the biophysical order, on the other. Yet here the biblical theme of the goodness of creation has always served as a check and prevented the incursion of any thoroughgoing ontological dualism

into the tradition.

Hebraic Foundations. In a cultural world which saw nature as essentially divine, Ancient Israel desacralized nature, but it did not devalue nature. On the contrary, Israel consistently and vividly affirmed the integrity, the goodness, and the glories of nature under the governance of God.

The mythologies of most of Israel's neighbors envisioned a primordial, pre-historical world of chaos in which the gods were born and in which a victory was enacted, to some degree, of the god(s) of life over the powers of chaos. In this perspective, the mundane world of human experience exists in a fragile position, constantly threatened by primordial chaos, surviving only in the shadow of the primordial victory of life. It is only by participating in that pre-temporal drama, by re-enacting it in festivals, by retelling the myth, that the human creature finds life, and is spared the ultimately destructive encounter with the powers of chaos still inherent in the world. So this mythological mentality brought with it what Mircea Eliade calls an "ontological obsession," a nostalgia for primordial Being, a drive to return to the pre-temporal events narrated in the myth, in order to renew and to sustain the reality of life experienced in the here and now.

In practice the obsession with primordial Being was closely related to the rhythms of nature. They were variously perceived as capricious and willful(as in Babylon) or permanently and harmoniously established(as in Egypt, where the regular rising and falling of the Nile set the tone). The world of the gods may not have been conceptually identified with the world of nature, but practically nature was experienced as an immediate, coextensive expression of the life of the gods: "The cosmos as a whole is an organism at once real, living, and sacred, it simultaneously reveals the modalities of being and sacrality(Eliade) ."

In contrast, Israel's fundamental apperception of reality was primarily historical, not ontological in the foregoing sense. Indeed, it might be said that Israel's faith, especially in its formative years, displayed a historical obsession. What was real for Israel, particularly in its early history in Canaan as a tribal confederacy (1200- 1000 B.C.), were the events at the Reed Sea and Sinai, pointing toward the conquest of Canaan, not some primordial drama leading to a world creation. But this should not lead us to conclude that natural reality was consisently unimportant or otherwise devalued by Israel at that time. Israel's primitive historical obsession was holistic, not insular. It encompassed the

material-vital dimension of human experience, no less than the moral-spiritual dimension. Already at the Exodus, the formative event of Israel's historical faith, Yahweh is recognized as one who exercises perfect governance in and over nature(Ex. 15:8; Joshua 24:7).

By the time of David's establishment of the monarchy (ca. 1000), the way had been prepared for the development of a fully explicit creation theology, a theology of origins as well as a theology of governance, within Israel's own historical framework, on Israel's own terms. The force of the challenge from the mythologies of Israel's neighbors continued to be felt, surely, especially in the Northern Kingdom, but the movement from the primordial to the historical, the desacralization of nature, had been fundamentally accomplished.

Israel began to celebrate the works of its God in nature in a variety of ways. Yahweh's creative governance was identified, for example, with the powerfully fecund working of the now detroned Canaanite Baal in the mythical storm(Psalm 29 was originally a poem to Baal, indicative of the "Babylonian-type" terror-ful apperception of nature). Or Yahweh's providential rule in nature was celebrated in terms that originally expressed the serene cosmic goverance of Egyptian deities(Psalm 104 shows striking resemblances to the Egyptian "Hymn to the

Sun"). Also, in conjunction with poems like Psalm 104 -- which itself is closely related to Genesis 1 — elements of a wisdom theology, with its pronounced interest in the natural order, probably began to appear at the same time(cf. Proverbs 8:22-31). All this interest in nature and in the works of God in nature, it should be stressed, was not a totally new, qualitative innovation in Israel's faith. It stood in continuity with the holistic perspective of the confederacy. But, with the desacralization of nature sufficiently accomplished, the theology of nature of the monarchical period does represent a striking exfoliation of that holistic motif.

This exfoliation can be interpreted, instructively as far as our theme is concerned, as a flowering of the archetypically feminine or "anima"(Carl Jung) aspects of the Hebrew Deity. Prior to the monarchy it was the archetypically male or "animus" aspects of Yahweh that seemed to be most celebrated — Yahweh as "Lord of Hosts." With the various Canaanite fertility gods and goddesses sufficiently dethroned or otherwise delimited, the anima-themes of fecundity and immanence in the earth could also come to the fore in pronounced ways. This happened most visibly in the wisdom tradition.

The articulation of the fully explicit holistic perspective we have been tracing is perhaps nowhere more

clearly evident than in the post-exilic Priestly creation narrative of Genesis 1, which has its roots in the traditions of Jerusalem during the monarchical period(1000-586). Here there is no hint of any primordial struggle in the world of the gods, nor is there any evident need expressed to polemicize directly against that view. God's present governance in nature/history, his powerful and righteous accomplishment of his gracious purposes in the midst of the given,mundane world, is seen as extending back to a universal beginning and also — insofar as the theme of the Divine Rest is eschatological("eschata" means "last things") -- forward to a universal consummation. In this sense, more generally, Israel's creation-faith and its eschatology are, as it were, imaginative extensions, back and forward, of its governance-faith. The picture of the cosmos we see in the Priestly account is historical(cf. the temporal structure, seven days), but it is just as vividly holistic. Every level of the creation is good. The whole, as it approaches its final fulfilment in the Divine Rest is seen to be "very good" (the post-Exilic prophet II Isaiah develops this omega-theme, along with the theme of origins, much more fully). God looks at everything he has made, not just the human creature, and rejoices in its goodness.

It is worth mentioning here, too, that the Hebraic mind knows little if anything about any "fallen cosmos."

For Hebraism, consistently, nature is thoroughly good* it is a congenial place for human life, "after the fall," no less than before. Nature, to be sure, is sometimes seen as having been "cursed" by God(cf. Gen. 3:16ff.). But that curse affects the human relationship to nature, not nature in itself; and, it is predicated on the fact of human sin.

Within this panoramic Hebraic vision of nature/history under the constant governance of Yahweh, from alpha to omega of the world, the identity of the human creature is understood very much to be rooted in nature, no less than in history. There is no body-soul dualism. The self is a psychosomatic unity. The self is an "animated body, not an incarnated soul."(H. Wheeler Robinson) The identity of the self, moreover, extends into the world of nature more generally, beyond the human body. The nepheš(the "soul") of the individual and the community, the latter with its "corporate personality" (Robinson), permeates the land. There is a distinction surely, but no sharp disjunction between humanity and nature. Concomitantly, there is no real evidence of any pervasive Hebrew arrogance toward nature, in the modern sense of domination. Humanity is given dominion, but that entails an overall responsibility to nature(to till the garden and keep it), not any arbitrary priviledge to ex-

ploit nature. "The relation between the earth and its owner... is a convenant relation, a psychic community, and the owner does not solely prevail in the relation. The earth has its nature, which makes itself felt, and demands respect."(Johannes Pedersen) Human dominion, moreover, is delimted by the Divine dominion, which establishes certain relative rights for nature, as well as various inalienable, but not absolute human prerogatives. Further, a certain contemplative relationship with nature, along with the caretaking and dominion motifs, is also envisioned. In this context, the earth, as a whole and in its various parts, is celebrated as a resplendent whole, full of the glory of God and giving him praise.

Beyond the immediate human milieu, furthermore, classical Hebraism understands that Yahweh has his own purposes with nature, in addition to his purposes with humanity. Nature is not simply a stage posited for God's history with the human creature, ^or the Hebraic mind, nature is good, it has its own integrity, at all levels. It exists to serve the Divine good-pleasure(cf. Ps. 104: 26), as well as to serve human well-being. Nature has apsects, also, which in themselves are alien to human sensibilities and serve no apparent human utility(cf. Ps. 104:19ff.), but which are nevertheless reflections of Divine purposes, however unknown and mysterious.

The whole of nature, finally, along with the immediate sphere of human life in nature/history, will one day be brought to its fulfilment in the day of the new heavens and the new earth proclaimed fervently by III Isaiah. There will be no "eternal return" to some primordial, a-cosmic beginning. On the contrary, the whole cosmos will be transformed and consummated, as well as human life. This is the final, visionary expression of Hebraic religion's holistic theological humanism.

Early Christian Emphases. An extensive and intricately complicated profusion of religious, philosophical, and socio-political experience lies between the thought and life of the early Church and the religion of classical Hebraism. As far as our theme is concerned, two specific developments need to be underlined, the rise of an intense eschatological consciousness and the implications of the life-history of Jesus.

It seems clear that a pervasive eschatological consciousness, that is, a belief that the end of the mundane world was fast approaching, dominated the mind of early Christianity. This represented, in significant measure, the renewal of what has been called a "prophetic eschatology"(Norman Perrin), the attitude toward the future characteristic of much of Hebraism. Prophetic eschatology was oriented toward a coming fulfilment, much more so than

some kind of drastic annihilation of the present order's being and value. Implicit in the prophetic eschatology, and often explicit, was the traditional Hebrew conviction that the creation as a whole is good and is destined, in every respect, for its own fulfilment. Dualistic motifs, very much "in the air" in New Testament times, did not, in this context, penetrate dramatically into the consciousness of the early Church. The general expectation was that the cosmos, as well as humanity, was destined for consummation. The cosmos was not going to be sloughed off at the end-time, as something essentially valueless or evil.

Still, a certain cosmic pessimism hovered at the edge of the early Christian consciousness, and made its presence felt occasionally in significant ways. Insofar as the early Christian eschatological mood was, at times, more apocalyptic than prophetic, there arose a certain tendency to devalue the present cosmic order as a whole -- including the socio-historical order — and to look patiently, sometimes with a sense of passive resignation, for the coming of the new order of things.

Closely related to that apocalyptic mentality was the conviction that the present world is pervaded and controlled by various evil powers or angelic forces. Jesus himself shared a certain belief in demons, although

his own eschatological expectations, insofar as they can be reconstructed, appear to have been much more prophetic than apocalyptic. It is sometimes thought that since the early Christian movement experienced the world permeated by demons that it must have taken a negative view toward the biophysical order itself. It seems clear, however, that the world of demons(sometimes confusingly called "cosmic powers" by-scholars) was not identified with the biophysical order by the early Church, any more than it was identified with the world of human morality and reason or with human institutions as such. Only incidentally, chiefly in-splinter communities spawned by Gnosticism, an esoteric religious movement which believed in an anti-cosmic Deity and an essentially evil material order, did the tendency take hold to identify the evil angelic powers or demons with the material stuff of the created order.

Some expressions of early Christianity, most notably the Gospel of John, do occupy a place in the theological spectrum which shows affinities with the dualistic Gnostic rejection of"this world" and the radically anthropocentric Gnostic concern for the salvation of the human self alone. Such affinities, however, were almost always balanced, as in the Fourth Gospel, by the weight of other more characteristically Hebraic motifs.

Behind many of these developments the teachings and the life-history of Jesus of Nazareth must have exercised a dual influence on the early Christian attitude toward nature. On the one hand, Jesus himself showed a deep Hebraic sensitivity for the wonders of nature and for the providential care of the Creator for his creation. Indeed, against a tendency in the Judaism of his time to see God more and more removed from the concrete environment of daily life, Jesus seemed to see God much more immediately, much more paternally/maternally involved with the world than many of the rabbis did. Further, we know from Jesus's "parables of growth" that he did look forward to a transformation of the whole world. These elements in Jesus's teaching and life-history must have had an impact of some moment on early Christian attitudes toward nature.

On the other hand, since the early Church by and large accepted the traditional Hebraic notion that the biophysical cosmos had not fallen, only the human creature within the visible cosmos, this meant that Jesus's primarily perceived role as the Redeemer did not immediately set him in relationship to the biophysical order. As a result, although Hebraic convictions about God and the natural order were more or less' taken for granted in early Christianity, the de facto existential impact of the Jesus-event must have had the effect of focusing an intense

kind of attention on the needs of humanity and the revolutionary possibilities for renewal in human life in light of Jesus's coming. For this and other reasons (such as apocalyptic and Gnostic influences) direct theological interest in nature seems to be less in evidence in early Christianity than it was in classical Hebraism.

Sf-ill, such evidence of attention to nature that we do have, when seen against the Old Testament — which, after all, was the Scriptures of the early Church — suggests that the holistic Hebraic motifs, taken up anew by Jesus, were indeed largely presupposed by his first and second century followers. The panoramic Hebraic vision of the whole creation moving from alpha to omega under the providential care of the Creator is perhaps most succinctly attested in the New Testament by Paul in a formula. This may have been borrowed from Stoic sources, but — like the creation Psalms 29 and 104 in their contexts — it was borrowed, presumably because Paul wanted to say something of his own: "For from him and through him and to him are all things."(Ro. 11:36) This is the same Paul who announces that ever since the world began God's power and divinity, however invisible, were to be seen in the things he had fashioned.(Ro. 1:20) Likewise, with regard to the end-time, Paul envisions the whole creation groaning in travail, as it waits for human re-

demption, so that it also might be liberated from the futility God has subjected it to(cf. the Hebrew idea of a Divine curse on the earth due to human sin).(Ro.8:19)

Very early in the history of Christianity, such affirmations of the universal governance of the Creator were given a definite christological shape(cf. I Cor. 8:6; Col. l:16f.), showing the early Church's assumption that the God who creates and rules is the same God who redeems, and vice versa(an identification later contested by the Gnostics and Marcion). Whether these texts also assume that Jesus was a "cosmic redeemer," that is, one who had some kind of direct redemptive influence on nature as a whole, is not clear(especially given the absence of the notion of a cosmic fall). Nevertheless, the notion of a cosmic fulfilment -- a concluding glorious chapter of the Creator's governance of the cosmos, from alpha to omega -- is generally assumed in the New Testament. Virtually all of the so-called "cosmic Christ" texts and Romans 8:19ff. as well, together with the teaching of Jesus, the Book of Revelation, and II Peter, presuppose and at times explicitly articulate a vision of a final cosmic transformation that was implicit in the Creator's original intentions for the cosmos. Indeed, Paul envions a time when the work of the Redeemer, Christ, will have come to an end, and God will be all in all.

(I Cor. 15:28) The Hebraic theme of the final Rest of the Creator, rejoicing in all things, could not have been far from Paul's mind at this point.

The Legacy of Patristic Christianity. In the era of "the fathers," roughly the period between Origen(ca. 185-ca. 254) and Augustine(354-430), the holistic perspective of the biblical era was further qualified, this time not by a certain diminishment of interest in nature in favor of other concerns, as in the early Church, but by a substantive alteration in the course of the tradition itself, in the emergence of a covert dualism of nature and grace. In patristic Christianity, a consciously articulated insular-anthropocentric theology of grace came to the fore more and more, yet still in conjunction with a more or less holistic theology of nature qua created.

There were some inner theological reasons why the new focus on God and humanity, in the context of the drama of salvation, began to develop. Christological and trinitarian concerns as a matter of course required much of the Church's theological energies as it sought to articulate its faith in the Greco-Roman world. But the substantive theological change we are concerned with here can be attributed at least as much to the influence of the culture in which the Church was immersed as to the theological need to establish the meaning of the

Christ event and the unity of its God.

From its earliest days, as Christianity established itself around the Mediterranean basin, it found itself very much a part of an "age of anxiety"(E. R. Dodds, from W. H. Auden). This was an era of marked socio-political and cultural uncertainty, not to say despair. One of the expressions of this general malaise was a sometimes thoroughgoing alienation from the biophysical order generally, and the human body in particular. The most extreme expression of these anti-cosmic tendencies was probably Gnosticism and its various offshoots. The material order envisioned by Gnosticism was essentially a vast, nauseous prison ruled capriciously by demonic angelfc powers. Much less exaggerated but not altogether dissimilar sentiments were shared by many during this period. It was widely believed, for example, that the earth was the lowest point of the universe, the center where the mere dregs and sediment of the cosmos had come to rest, due to their excessive weight. Some singled out the human body and human sexuality as especially loathesome. Thus, although the neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus self-consciously rejected Gnostic dualism and its particular view that the body is evil, he appeared nevertheless to be ashamed of having a body at all.

This general alienation from the cosmos overall and

the human body in particular was reflected by, and no doubt to some degree the result of, the attitudes toward the material world articulated by more than one school of philosophers. To be sure, classical Platonism and Stoicism articulated what has been called a "cosmic optimism." They viewed the cosmos as beautiful, and in some sense as a reflection of ultimate goodness. Yet Greek thought, most vividly its Platonic strain, presupposed a radical gulf between the intelligible world and the sensible: between the realm of immutability constituted by the Ideas or various deities, and souls — this was the source of being and value -- and the realm of mutability, the material order. Hence a tendency arose to devalue the material world. At best the milieu of matter was thought of as an instrument or a platform for human life, and as perhaps being edifying for the journey of the soul to its immutable home apart from matter. More often, however, matter was approached mainly as an obstacle, sometimes a very threatening obstacle, in the way of knowledge, salvation, or the good life. A related aspect of Greek thinking in this regard was the tendency to absolutize the ultimate Deity or the ultimate Reality in such a way that it was totally removed from the mundane world of human experience. Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover," for example, was so remote, so immutable, that it did not

know that the world existed.

One important result of the philosophical devaluation of matter and absolutizing of God, as that tendency became more and more pronounced, especially in the Platonic tradition, was the emergence of the need to postulate links between the ultimate Reality, "the One," and the finite order, "the Many." This challenge was taken up by Plotinus and others. They set forth the idea of emanations from the One: a scale or chain of being("the Great Chain of Being") extending downward from the One, through a spiritual realm with various gradations, to the material order, and ultimately to non-being.

Paradoxically, this emanation schema brought with it dual possibilities, as far as the Greco-Roman sense of cosmic alienation was concerned. It could either serve as a corrective to that alienation or as a reenforcement. The downward movement of the One was generally interpreted, as Plato had done, as an overflowing of Divine goodness. So Plotinus could be taken by the beauties of the cosmos and seek to refute the dualism of the Gnostics. On the other hand, insofar as there was a nisus or drive in the Great Chain of Being leading back up to the One, the logical impulse for anyone who took the schema seriously was to reject the world of matter, to desire to leave the prison of the body behind, to think of matter perhaps,

as Plotinus did, as an illusion, or, with somewhat less sophistication, as the very matrix of evil.

This duality of perspectives — the One as good and emanating; the One as alien and otherworldly -- suggests a further dimension of the emanation schema which should not be overlooked. The two aspects of the One seem to be expressions of the archaic anima and animus principles of the religious consciousness, in mythological terms, the Earth Goddess and the Sky God. Archetypically, the first is generative, overflowing, loving all things, intimately implicated in matter(cf .mater),whereas the second stands over against the earth. The animus principle is transcendent, autonomous, intellectually self-contained, and wholly other in virtually every essential aspect.

This Greek emanation schema dominates the thinking of most of the fathers. The story begins most prominently perhaps with Origen, whose thought resembles Plotinus's philosophy in many ways. Origen presents the image of a world of spirits(the logikoi) in perfect communion with God in eternity. As free creatures, some of them turn away from God and fall. God creates the material world then, as a kind of gracious act, to stop their fall toward ultimate non-being. The material world for Origen is thus a result of Divine benificence in a sense, but its more fundamental raison d'etre is the fall. Essentially,

the material world is a kind of purgatory; it would have been better if it had never been created. Also, the ultimate ending of the Divine Economy, as Origen depicts it, is the return of the spiritual creatures to perfect communion with God in eternity and the falling away of the material order into nothingness or non-being which was its essential origin in the first place.

Origen's thought was challenged by other theologians, almost immediately. But, it should be noted, as far as the theology of nature is concerned, it was chiefly Origen's view of the creation of the world that was of concern to his opponents, not so much his schatization of the final consummation.

One of the important corrections of Origen's theology of creation came into the tradition in the East through the commentary on Genesis 1, the Hexa enter on, by Basil the Great(ca, 330-379). Irenaeus of Lyon had already identified the Third Person of the Christian Trinity, the Spirit, with the Wisdom of God, that is, with the creative and integrative governace of the cosmos by God. Basil takes up this motif in his Genesis commentary, and highlights the immediately present, anima-generative apects of the Deity: "How did the Spirit of God move on the waters? ...it cherished the nature of the waters as one sees a bird cover the eggs with her body and im-

part to them vital force from her own warmth." Basil also identifies the Spirit with the World Soul of platonic philosophy, that is, with the immanent, animating principle of the whole material order.

Later, in the West, the first chapters of Genesis also fascinated Augustine. In his various commentaries he displays a rich sense for the goodness of creation, of nature in particular. Against some detractors, moreover, he maintains that not all things were created for the sake of human utility; God has his reason in fashioning some things that we do not always know(here Augustine picks up nuances from Psalm 104). Also, Augustine thinks of the involvement of the Creator in the world of nature concretely and intimately. He likens the Creator to a shepherd or a husbandman. He depicts the Spirit of God, too, in terms of the active Wisdom of God, much as Basil had done(although he seems to stop short of identifying the Spirit with the immanent World Soul as Basil did).

When Augustine turns from the movement of the Creator toward the created and within the created, however, to the return of the created to the Creator, he seems to be curiously silent, relatively speaking, about the natural order. He seems to anticipate a consummation of all things at the very end of time, but he does not dwell on that theme. More particularly, he has a low opinion of

the human body, particularly the female body, and he continually recommends virginity as a path to heaven. His view of the final state of things, furthermore, seems to be, as a matter of emphasis at least, mainly if not totally spiritual. Augustine's famous statement in his Soliloquies points in the same direction: "God and the soul, that is what I desire to know, nothing more." All this is undoubtedly related to Augustine's doctrine of election, which is concerned with the destiny of the human creature alone(animals, etc., are not elected), and envisions the establishment of that destiny in eternity prior to the creation of the world(a motif which we will see appearing again in John Calvin and Karl Barth, with similar effects). When Augustine turns to the arena of grace, in other words, his rich sense for nature's integrity and goodness is noticeable by its absence. In the context of grace, nature seems to be of value for him, at most, as that which can help the soul return to itself and thence to God, who — as far as the finality of the universe is concerned — is essentially exalted high above the world of nature.

What we see emerging here is a covert dualism of nature and grace, already prefigured in the duality of aspects we noted in the emanation schema of thinkers like Plotinus. It is a covert dualism because the material

world is seen as good, qua overflow of the Divine Goodness, and because the material order is seen as having its own integrity in the eyes of God, even to the point of attaining come -- minimally depicted — final consummation. It is a covert dualism because the essential goodness of nature seems to become of less and less significance in the sphere of grace, which, in turn, comes to dominate Augustine's thought more and more. Grace for Augustine is a highly spiritual, anthropocentric concept. The biblical motif of a new heavens and a new earth understood as a Divine goal implicit in creation from the very beginning thus apparently falls to the wayside.

The Medieval Resolution. The covert dualism of nature and grace that became visible in the patristic period not only becomes fully established in the Middle Ages, but the anthropocentric, spiritualizing view of grace turns back, as it were, to shape the Church's understanding of nature qua created. We see the Christian pilgrim embraced by grace, having left the world of nature behind, with his or her eyes contemplating the heavenly Jerusalem ahead. We see this pilgrim pause, turn around, and begin to survey the world of nature once again, with the feeling -- "all this is for my sake." Even more, we can see a curious kind of romanticism emerging, that allows the pilgrim to see the alien world he or she had

left behind, not only as a world waiting to be mastered, but as a world replete with elegance.

Until the twelfth century, when these trends became fully established, the world of nature seemed in the main to be, indeed, the way of pilgrimage, as far as the Clnrch was concerned. It seems that the sense of cosmic alienation that permeated the late Roman Empire became a fixed part of the Christian consciousness in the early Middle Ages, already influencedas it was, no doubt, by the covert dualism of nature and grace we have identified. In place of the praise for nature's beauty which one sees in the works of Basil and Augustine from time to time, one meets the moralizing bestiaries, herbals, and lapidaries, handbooks for the interpretation of a natural world now conceived, sometimes bizarrely, chiefly as a world of symbols that points toward the heavenly mysteries of human salvation. Meanwhile, at a more esoteric level, the anticosmic theological schema of Origen appeared in a new guise in the writings of John the Scot(ca. 810-ca. 877), who also translated the spiritualizing neoplatonic works of the sixth century Greek neoplatonist, Dionysius the Areopagite.

Almost imperceptibly during these centuries of worldly uncertainty and strife, however, during this epoch of otherworldly, spiritual struggle, a new movement was

being born, which was profoundly to affect Western Christendom -- Benedictine monasticism. In keeping with the practical, even militarized Roman spirit, Benedict(ca.48O- ca. 550) founded a communal monasticism whose asectic discipline was to be relatively modest, but highly structured. It was to be predicated not on contemplation, but on work -- both in the form of communal worship and, what hitherto had been widely scorned in the Greco-Roman world, manual labor. This was no longer the inner journey of the hermit in the desert, seeking to recapture the state of Adam in paradise through worldly denial, as in Eastern monasticism. This was much more the venturing forth of the militia Christi, the spiritual children of Israel, proceeding through the wilderness toward the promised land. In due course communities of Benedictines literally did go out into the wilderness areas of Eurpose and began to tame nature for the purposes of their own survival. This, too, was thought of as a spiritual pilgrimage, and that it was. But it was de facto, if not by intention, a world-transforming not a world-denying pilgrimage. Was this a manifestation of the holistic Hebraic sense of dominion, of caring for the earth and contemplating the earth, as well as reaping its fruits? Or was it more an unavoidable commitment to survival inspired by the model of Roman efficiency? Probably it

was some mixture of both.

The twelfth century was a watershed in the Middle Ages in many ways. A new sense for human competence and human ability to understand and master the world seemed to be burgeoning everywhere. Alan of Lille(ca. 1128-1202), a theologian of considerable stature in this period (he was called the doctor universalis), articulated and developed many of these new sensibilities. Of special interest, as far as our theme is concerned, is his De planctu Naturae — "The Lament of Nature." This is an allegorical poem about the virgin goddess Natura, a figure whose literary and philosophical history seems to stem from the Earth Goddess cults that flourished in the Greco-Roman world(and, of course, before).

The De planctu Naturae is clearly a nature-affirming and nature-celebrating poem. Among other things Alan describes the Goddess's virgin body sensuously, and her domain, particularly copulation among the animals, with a tangible, erotic tone. The esthetic legacy of Basil and Augustine was thereby revived and exurberantly extended. On the other hand, the theological framework in which this celiration of nature appears is one that has already insured that the feminine Natura will be totally subservient to, and removed from, the exalted masculine Creator. Alan underlines this point at the

end of his poem, by showing how Natura(here also a type for the Church) is rightfully subservient, totally, to the priest figure Genius.

Whether Alan'b view of nature "expresses the Christian idea of nature common to practically all medieval theologians"(Etienne Gilson) may be debatable. But it seems clear that in his work the covert dualism of nature and grace we have been tracing becomes overt. Yet this happens, paradoxically perhaps, in a way that affirms the attractiveness and value of that which has been self-consciously made subservient to God, the angels, and human reason. The dualism we have to do with here, then, is not an ontological dualism(such as the Gnostic system). It is a pronounced dualism of value. Nature's goodness, however beautiful"shd' may be, turns out to be a markedly inferior kind of goodness. Alan expresses this succinctly in a formula. Irrational creatures, he says, are good only with regard to the beginning(ab alpha). Rational creatures, on the other hand, whose beatitude is the reason why the world was created in the first place, are both good with regard to the beginning and with regard to the end(ex alpha et omega). Nature may be attractive and sensuous, in other words, but she has her definite place, subordinate to and instrumental for, the world of rational creatures and their destiny to be partakers

of grace.

Further, there is evidence in Alan's thought of a certain removal of God's creative activity from the material order, once the world has been created. God governs, it seems, mainly through the agency of angels. This means that the archetypical animus aspects of the Deity are, by default at least, being accented more and more, leaving the anima-aspects of creativity to the sphere of nature. In the twelfth century, interestingly in this regard, the idea that the Holy Spirit is the World Soul (pdiich Basil held) was condemned.

This nature-grace dualism was reflected more generally, and in much more exaggerated ways, in the secular and religious piety of the period. Courtly love began to flourish in the twelfth century, as did a new and intense kind of Marian devotion. Both movements idealized the feminine and both envisioned the feminine as concretely embodied in the world of nature, whether it be the romantic springtime or the new "naturalistic" imagery of a beautiful earthly mother with her child. Dramatically, in the same culture at the same time, a fervent denial of the feminine and the fleshly was also articulated -- a "contempt for the world." The latter mentality came to a kind of esthetic fruition in Germany during the next century in the figure of Frau Welt, which appeared in the

portal sculptures of many Churches(this figure has strong affinities with the earlier architectural figure, "The Prince of this World," the Devil). On the front she is attractive, and shows an alluring aristocratic smile. Behind she is being eaten by worms and frogs and snakes. Frau Welt, it seems, is the Doppelganger of the Goddess Natura, the courtly Lady, the earthy, accessible Madonna. Frau Welt reveals the back side, as it were, of the romantic naturalism of the high Middle Ages.

It would be too much to say, as we survey these developments, that the seminal theology of the great Dominican doctor, Thomas Aquinas(1225-1274), is only a sober and well-balanced exposition of the kind of theology of nature developed by Alan of Lille and reflected, in exaggerated ways, elsewhere in the twelfth century. But the views of Thomas and Alan are similar in a number of respects. Perhaps the major difference between the two was Thomas's Aristotelianism(Alan was a Platonist). If nature in the twelfth century was beginning to be set apart from God in a somewhat self-contained position, this tendency was accented even more by Thomas, under the influence of Aristotelian metaphysics. All the same, the nature that Thomas thus envisions, however autonomous it may be, and to that degree removed from the governance of God, is a nature not unlike Alan's, albeit depicted in

staid metaphysical rather than affective poetic terms. For Thomas each being has its own intrinsic telos, and all things are adjusted to each other in a universal symmetry, with varying levels of perfection, leading up to the human creature at the highest level of the sensible world. The whole cosmos for Thomas is, as it were, a living city, providing a congenial habitat for human life in this world. The human creature, moreover, is very much an embodied creature. For Thomas the body is no prison. It is through the senses that humanity knows God and it will be in the body, transfigured in heaven, that the blessed will see God.

On the other hand, for all his affirmation of the natural and the corporeal, Thomas essentially sees the whole of nature as totally subordinated to the human creature. Thomas maintains, as did Alan, that all "irrational" creatures were made "for the sake of man}' to provide a place of habitation and food, in one respect, and as an aid to knowing God, in another. Nature finds its perfection in serving human existence. Thomas thus reproduces the theological framework of Alan, according to which the material order is good only ab alpha, whereas the human order is good both ex alpha et omega: "Now the final perfection, which is the end of the whole universe, is the perfect beatitude of the saints at the con-

summation of the world; and the first perfection is the completeness of the universe at its first founding, and this is ascribed to the seventh day." In the end-time, accordingly, it will be chiefly the human creatures among the many material creatures, who will be consummated. The four material elements will be renewed, but only in order to have a fitting renewal of man's body, which is composed of those elements. But plants and animals will not be renewed. They will disappear when all things are consummated. Thus the famous Thomistic principle that "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it" turns out to be insular at the end-time, at least as far as the biosphere is concerned. For, in effect, grace does destroy the plants and animals.

Against this background of a dualism of nature and grace, we approach the much celebrated medieval friend of the animals, Francis of Assisi(1182-1226), with a certain reserve. Francis, whose lifetime spans the years between the death of Alan and the birth of Thomas, is undoubtedly an appealing figure. But there is no prima facie reason why we should approach him with the assumption that -- notwithstanding his captivating Hymn to the Sun, in which he addressed the fire as brother and the earth as sister, notwithstanding his legendary sermons to the birds and his taming of the wolf -- the humble

saint overcame the dualism of nature and grace we have been considering.

The motif of the holy man taming the animals, to begin with, is a familiar one in the Western theological tradition, with roots in the time of the desert fathers. It presupposes a genuine harmony with nature, to be sure; but that can easily be accounted for by the kind of schema developed by Alan of Lilian In short, the motif of harmony with the animals may be quite anthropocentric, related more to the second Genesis creation narrative, Adam in the Garden, than to the first. Also, Francis's aceticism, particularly with regard to his own body, and his steadfast acceptance of the celibate life, while surely not out of the ordinary in his time, nevertheless suggest that the medieval fear of the material order(cf. Frau Welt), above all the fleshly feminine, may have been a formative part of Francis's life-history, at least to some degree.

Yet the self-authenticating power of the Hymn to the Sun is undeniable. So is the symbolic power of Francis's attention to a very earthly Christ figure (not so much the heavenly Christ exalted at the right hand of the Father), who was born in the midst of animals. It was Francis, after all, who invented the "manger scene." To find a poem that expresses such a respect for the integrity of nature, particularly as that is expressed

in the Hymn, one probably has to return to Psalm 104. Perhaps Francis's radical devotion to the earthly, incarnate Christ of the Gospels gave him the insight and the intuition he needed to allow him to transcend the nature-grace dualism of the medieval mind, and to return to the fullness of the holistic biblical vision of nature.

The Ambiguous Witness of the Reformation. In Reformation thought, especially in Father(1483-1586), we definitely see a return to the holistic theological humanism of the Old and New Testaments. On the other hand, most dramatically perhaps in Calvinism, we can observe some of the trends we have identified in the Middle Ages being given a new dynamism, prefiguring modern developments.

Father's theology is humanistic, in the sense that we have used that expression. Justification by faith was for him the key religious experience and the key theological doctrine. And justification has to do exclusively with God and humanity. Yet Father's understanding of justification, however insular it may be explicitly, takes for granted that the believer now, in this present world, is blessed with fullness of grace. This corresponds to Father's view of creation: "I believe that God has created me," he writes in his Small Catechism, "together with all creatures." This motif, "together with," is characteristic of his doctrine of God, as well as

his views of redemption and creation. Luther knows no other God than the God who is intimately together with nature, who is extensively and deeply active in the cosmos, as well as in world history and in the particular history of the Church. Luther has a vivid sense for a"continuous creation," which sets him apart from many of his medieval forebears who, as a matter of course, distinguished sharply between creation and providence.

More particularly, Luther challenges the whole venerable conceptuality of the Great Chain of Being. To begin with, he repudiates the search for God "in the heavens," the way of speculation. For Luther, human beings can only know God as one who encounters them in his activity "in, with, and under" the material order. In this connection Luther totally rejects the idea that angels have any role to play in God's creative governance of the world. Augustine, Alan, and Thomas all maintained that God alone created the world; but that point was made with regaid to God's originating creativity. With regard to God's providential creativity, his governance of the world, they introduced the idea that God rules through the mediation of angels. This, of course, was in keeping with the schema of the Great Chain of Being. Luther rejects all that and assigns the agency of governance to God alone. In this respect, the God depicted by Luther

has a certain tangibly apparent generative, anima-aspect, a theme which we saw loosing prominence in the Middle Ages. Luther takes Basil's notion of the creative brooding of the Spirit with a thoroughgoing seriousness. At the same time, God for Luther has terrible aspects in nature. But this is also a biblical motif, evident for example in Psalm 29. Like the Psalmist, Luther recognizes that God has purposes in and for the world of nature that are in-srutable, even alien to human sensibilities. But whether beautiful and wondrous or mysterious and fearful, nature is shaped by God, in Luther's view, to be an abundant source of blessings, now and in the life to come. In this sense Luther can say that nature"was made for the sake of man," that is, as a manifestation of grace.

The human creature, like the Creator, according to Luther, is deeply immersed in the created order. Luther envisions Adam and Eve enjoying a common table with the animals. And, in a context where countless doctors of the Church had celebrated the grandeur of reason as the image of God, Luther states that Adam and Eve's greatness before God was the fact that they walked about naked. In this connection, whatever one may think overall about Luther's attitudes toward marriage, the significance of his rejection of the heaven-bent world of monastic celi-bacy and his uncertain but passionate entrance into the

fleshly world of matrimony cannot be overestimated, as far as his theology of nature is concerned. It signals his refusal to recognize a substantial supramundane heavenly realm, a world of spirit, which is the human creature's created destiny. He sought his humanity before God in a consummation with the flesh.

This is not to suggest that Luther was some kind of a cosmic optimist. On the contrary, he had a deep sense of the sinfulness of human life, and he saw that sinfulness as radically effecting human life in nature. Luther has a holistic understanding of sinful humanity's life in nature, no less than humanity's life in nature qua creation, as originally intended by God.

In the context of his understanding of salvation, Luther's theology of nature again shows its holistic character. Here we encounter one of his least understood but perhaps most innovative doctrine, the ubiquity of the risen, ascended Christ. This theme is, like others, intimately related to his rejection of the conceptuality of the Great Chain of Being. No longer is Christ seen as removed, as lifted to the highest pinnacle of the hierarchy, seated at the exalted right hand of God in patriarchal splendor. For, the Creator himself is not removed at such a pinnacle. So Luther says: "the right hand of God is everywhere." It follows, then: if Christ is at the

right hand of God, then Christ is everywhere, too. This idea shows how congenial the whole of nature is to the power and the presence of grace, according to Luther's way of thinking.

Luther depicts the life of the redeemed, correspondingly, as a new life in nature: "Erasmus does not concern himself with this; it interests him little how the fetus is made and formed and developed in the womb.... but by God's mercy we can begin to recognize His wonderful works and wonders also in the flowers, when we ponder his might and goodness." With regard to the final day, moreover, Luther envisons a cosmic renewal of universally beautiful proportions. Grace here finally will take the whole material order under its wings for ever. To use the medieval terminology, for Luther the "irrational" as well as the "rational" creatures are good, not only ex alpha, but also ex omega.

John Galvin(1509-1564) developed a theology which, retrospectively, seems to have been much more a bridge between the medieval and modern epochs than Luther's was. Calvin's image of God as Creator and his companion vision of the created order was holistic in many ways. He sees the immediate effects of the power and wisdom and goodness of God in all things. He states on more than one occasion that the whole creation is the "theatre of God's glory."

Yet, for reasons that are not altogether clear, the image of God that Calvin projects is, in nuance at least, much more transcendent, much more removed from the mundane world than the God depicted by Luther. More specifically, Calvin rejected Luther's idea that the right hand of God is everywhere; that is to suggest, for Calvin the Godhead seems to have a kind of fixed place. Also, although the point has sometimes been overdone, Calvin's God does have a stern patriarchal countenance at times. For Calvin, the absolute sovereignty of God is a recurrent theological emphasis, beginning with the inexplicable Divine decision in heaven to elect some and to damn others. In Calvin's thought, furthermore, here again in contrast to Luther's, there is also a visible although not exaggerated body-soul dualism that corresponds to the emphasis he places on Divine transcendence.

But perhaps the key difference between Luther and Calvin, as far as their theologies of nature are concerned, has to do with the aforementioned doctrine of election. For Luther, election is an ititra-mundane, existential experience, by and large. For Calvin, in contrast, and howevermuch he tries to qualify the idea, election is an "absolute decree" in eternity, prior to the creation of the world. And election has to do with humanity alone. This then has ramifications both for

Calvin's view of the practical life and his image of the end-time.

The legacy of Calvin with regard to the practical life of the redeemed has been much discussed. Although his thought surely has its own integrity and should not be equated with that of his followers, his doctrine of election does contain within it the seeds of the later "Protestant Ethic" studied by Max Weber and others. Calvin did affirm that "the calling of the elect is a sign and testimony of their election."

Calvin's view of the end-time seems to be congruent with other significant doctrines of his which shape his theology of nature. His eschatological vision seems to be intimately tied to his view of election. He has virtually nothing to say about any renewal of the whole cosmos. At the same time, he discusses the resurrection of the just and the unjust at considerable length. By his silence about the whole of nature,his vision of the end-time seems to be even more anthropocentric than was Thomas's. Thomas at least projected the idea that the material elements will be renewed(and the heavenly bodies, too). Calvin has nothing to say about these questions.

Overall, then, we can say that Reformation thought, at least as it appears in Luther and Calvin, was pre-occupied, as was the whole Middle Ages, with the theology

of grace. That was the arena, indeed, that it chose for its break with the received tradition. Yet within this context, largely through the insightfulness of Luther's and Calvin's biblical exegesis, it seems, the scope of Reformation thought was broadened to include attempts at revising the medieval theology of nature, as well. This was accomplished by both Luther and Calvin, with varying results.

Calvin, apparently, never fully appropriated the holistic perspective that Luther had identified at an early point in his development. This meant, then, that the insular kind of anthropocentric, patriarchal theology of nature already set in motion in the patristic and medieval periods was given a new lease on life, as it were, in Calvin's theology. On the other hand, Calvin's thought contained a certain social dynamic and a vision of righteousness in society, that was largely missing in Luther's. Luther's revision of the medieval theology of nature seemed to bear good fruits ihsofar as he was concerned with the material order as such. But there Luther seemed to stop. He more or less accepted the hierarchical kind of society bequeathed to him by the Middle Ages. That brought with it its own set of problems as Lutheranism developed, and as it tended more and more to identify the social order of the German state with an unchangeable

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view, Kant also tried to relativize it*, On the basis of intuitive experience of the human self-consciousness, which for him was disclosed chiefly in moral experience, he projected the idea of a "noumenal" world as the world of reality behind all "phenomenal" existence, that is, behind the world of nature as envisioned by mechanistic science. In this sense, for Kant, nature is not ultimate Reality, by any means. But Kant also stressed that there can be no cognitive access to this world of the noumenal, other than through the immediate, but well delimited data of moral experience. To speak concretely of the providential involvement of God in nature or the immanence of the self in nature would, therefore, be to transgress the limits Kant had imposed oh knowledge. Hence Kant's attempt to relativize the meaning of the -- alienating — mechanical view of nature was , at best, only marginally successful.

Kant was left awestruck with "the starry heavens above," as he said memorably, and "the moral law within." By the former he surely meant the fated turning of the eternal spheres of nature. By the latter he apparently meant a courageous, stoic commitment to moral existence in an alien world. So, the holistic dimension of Luther's theological humanism had been carved away. The living, immanent God and the embodied world of human life that

so captivated Luther were no more to be seen. The Kantian God, insofar as he is more than merely a postulate of practical reason, is a highly spiritualized Deity. The essential human self is also highly spiritualized. Kant never really qualified the anti-cosmic aspects of the mechanical view of nature, as Augustine, for example, had qualified some of the anti-cosmic aspects of neoplatonism and had rejected the dualism of the Manicheans. It is striking, then, that the Kantian approach to nature deeply influenced much of the Protestant theology that followed in its wake, with similar results for the theology of nature along the way(much the same story can be told about the post-Kantian Protestant accommodation to the Darwinian view of nature, except where that view denied the transcendental human self).

Karl Barth was trained in the Kantian tradition, but he quickly began to reject it wholesale. He soon gave up any effort to "make room for faith." Rather, he began to seek to articulate the faith of the tradition on its own terms, boldly, and without any expressed need to accommodate his thought at every turn to the science and philosophy of modernity. In Barth's thought, accordingly, we meet a sense of affirmation of the created order("God justifies the creation") and a vision

of Divine providence graciously overseeing the entire cosmos. Barth celebrates the life of humanity with a special passion, recalling biblical emphases. He depicts a life rich with mutuality and justice as the reality of human life in this world, a reality established in eternity on the unshakeable foundations of Divine grace. Yet at one significant point, if at no other, Barth remains closely tied to his Kantian inheritance -- his theology of nature.

Barth states at the outset, in good Kantian fashion, that the doctrine of creation properly can treat "only God and man.[1]' There is no theological knowledge of the cosmos in itself, he argues, only our knowledge of a God who is graciously disposed toward us and whose grace is the ultimate reality of all things. What view of nature does Barth present, then? He maintains that he has no identifiable view of nature.

But on closer examination it becomes more and more apparent that the world of nature he envisions, notwithstanding all he has to say about God justifying the creation and governing it faithfully, has pronounced mechanical characteristics. Barth strongly accents the self-enclosed character of nature in itself. He also underlines the human creature's dominion over nature and God[1]s transcendence of nature, much more than their

immanence in nature. Along with this, Barth produces a purely instrumental, radically anthropocentric schematization of nature's place in the overall Divine Economy.

The schema begins with God's eternal election of Jesus Christ and the human community in Christ. Then, as Barth says, this covenant of grace needs a place to be actualized. Hence, God creates the world and then proceeds to realize his eternal election of humanity through a history with Israel and the Church which has its center in Jesus Christ. With this schematization, it will be evident, Barth has essentially reproduced the medieval dualism of nature and grace. As for Thomas, in Barth's view the raison d'etre of the biophysical order, the only reason, is the salvation of humanity. Nature, it turns out finally, is no more than the stage for human history. Nature as a machine - like reality, nature as a stage for the unfolding of God's gracious purposes with humanity -- that is the Barthian theology of nature.

The thought of Paul Tillich differs from Barth's in many respects. One of these differences is Tillich's theology of nature. Tillich breaks completely with the Kantian tradition. He does not limit the substance of theology, as Barth does, to the foci of God and humanity.

Tillich is deeply sensitive to the findings of modern science, to be sure, more so than Barth it seems. Yet, for Tillich, the theologian is reponsible for a constructive theology of nature, along with everything else.

From Tillich's earliest days, furthermore, he was much more appreciative of the importance of the romantic tradition in the West than Barth was. As a boy Tillich was already embued with some of the mystical sensibilities for nature that had been kept alive in his Lutheran tradition. As a young scholar he studied the philosophy of Friedrich Schelling(1775-1854), whose philosophy of nature was very much influenced by romantic apperceptions of nature.

Self-consciously thinking and writing with a sense of his indebtedness to the romantic tradition, Tillich envisions a world of nature that is profoundly animated, a cosmos grounded immediately in the majestic life-giving reality of God, a material world full of mystery, fecundity, beauty, and wholeness. With qualifications, one could even use the word "sacramental" to describe Tillich's theology of nature. He appears to have gone a long way toward reintegrating the exiled anima-principle back into the doctrine of God. His .mystical, holistic vision of nature is one of the results of that synthesis.

At the same time, Tillich makes every effort to

remain faithful to the humanism of the classical theological tradition, and not to be led or to drift in the direction of a nature-monism as some of the mystics, and also romantic thinkers like Schelling, showed signs of doing. Whether Tillich was able to do this, whether he was able to establish sufficiently the sphere of human life in history as a dimension of the creation with its own special rights and destiny, has been debated. As the crowning theme of his systematic theology shows, in any case, he made every effort to articulate a theology of "History and the Kingdom of God" as the self-transcending fruition of his theology of feature.

When we turn from the Protestant strain of modern Christian thought to the Catholic, we see a theological history which has been much less geared to responding to the worldview of modern science than much of modern Protestant thought. Although this had a number of unfortunate effects, it has not been without its good results as well, among them the refusal to incorporate the mechanical view of nature into any theological synthesis. The theology of the French paleontologist and Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin(1881-1955) indicates some of the possibilities, and also some of the liabilities, that seem to be implicit in modern

Catholic thought as it turns once again to the theology of nature — and, as it now makes its influence felt in the new climate bequeathed by the Second Vatican Council.

Historian Arthur Lovejoy, in his study The Great Chain of Being observes that the Great Chain of Being was "temporalized" in the modern period. This is Teilhard's milieu. He temporalizes the Great Chain of Being in a masterful, imaginative, and highly suggestive way. He depicts a cosmic process that begins with a situation of primordial, undefined matter, and which moves forward and upward through a series of stages of increasing complexity and consciousness: cosmogenesis, biogenesis, and noogenesis. This process, which emerges through an infinitely random but directional process of "cosmic drift," which proceeds from the primordial Many to higher and higher levels of integration, ultimately is consummated with the unification of all things in the One, the cosmic Christz christogenesis. The universe, according to Teilhard, has an inner side, a "within," which opens it at every level to radiations of Divine love. This love serves as a kind of spiritual magnet (the ultimate "final cause"), drawing all things to unity with an Omega point, which is the transcendent spiritual reality of the resurrected, ascended Christ.

It will be apparent that one of Teilhard's chief

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concerns is to integrate the main lines of Darwinian science into Catholic theology, the way Thomas attempted to integrate the philosophy of Aristotle in his day. Teilhard's success in presenting a theology of evolution, as one might expect, is much debated, particularly insofar as he claims to be doing science when he sets forth his schema of cosmogenesis, biogenesis, and noogenesis.

Like Tillich, moreover, although in his own way, Teilhard also projected a theology of nature that stands clearly apart from the mechanical view of nature. For Teilhard, nature has an inner, a "psychic" side, that is located by him not in some inaccessible no urns rial realm(as for Kant and Bartl^, but in every natural entity, however small, however large, however material* . It is exhibited in the development of complexity leading to the evolution of the central nervous system, and so on. Further, the cosmos is not like some huge machine running forever in perpetual sameness; the cosmos has a telos, according to Teilhard? it is underway. The cosmos is a process, not a machine. The anima-motif is apparent in Teilhard's schema, too. For him, God is present immediately to all things, eliciting and nurturing the cosmic process, rather than dominating it from on hiAr. God, for Teilhard, is very much the creative Spirit brooding over the waters.

Yet for all his concern with the world of nature and the congenial presence of God with nature, Teilhard seems to have stayed sufficiently within the Catholic mainstream, and within its theology of nature and grace in particular, so as not to have transcended that tradition's dualism of nature and grace. The whole process of cosmic evolution for Teilhard is a movement toward higher and higher levels of spiritual and rational intensity. Ultimately, indeed, as Teilhard describes the process, the final stage will be the white heat of incandescent spirit in the presence of God. The world of matter, except for human bodies, which will have been transmuted into new spiritual forms, will fall back into non-being. At this point in his thought Teilhard seems to be much more in debt to the anti-cosmic conceptuality of the Great Chain of Being in some of its earliest expressions, as in Plotinus, than he seems to be reflecting the fullness of the biblical vision of nature. If anything, in this regard, Teilhard seems to have exaggerated the nature«grace dualism of Thomas.

A certain anti-cosmic spirit, or at least a visible disjunction between humanity and nature, is also noticeable in Teilhard's ethics in this respect. The relationship of the human creature to nature which he depicts is almost exclusively predicated on dominion,

not to say domination of nature. Notwithstanding his powerful mystical spirituality, which celebrates the earth, he constantly speaks of ''man transforming the earth" or "building the earth." Indeed, Teilhard believes that the leading edge of evolution is now the human mind, particularly as it expresses itself in science and technology. Nature, for Teilhard, in a manner of speaking, does have a fulfilment to look forward to, but it will be a technologically imposed fulfilment; and then it will fall away into nothingness. Meanwhile, humanity alone will pass through the narrow gate of the Omega point, perfectly unified, yet in a way that Tẽilhard says will preserve the identity of all individuals, to be with God. Teilhard's last word about nature seems to be raditally insular, not holistic.

Retrospect. Is it true, as Feuerbach suggested, and as many others have said, that the Hebraic-Christian tradition has been interested only in God and the soul, not nature? One can understand why Feuerbach was prompted to say what he did. Throughout the course of the tradition an insular theological humanism has been very much in evidence. Nature has been relegated to a subservient position in this strain of the tradition, in various ways, sometimes to the point of radical devaluation. Yet at the same time, this "fall" of

nature away from the theo-humanistic center of value has always been checked? sometimes very soon and with impressive results, as in the romantic naturalism of the high Middle Ages. The critics of the tradition have not always seen this in their haste to condemn what they have seen as "orthodox Christian arrogance towards nature." Further, the critics have not always noticed either that the motives behind the subordination of nature have not usually been sheer will-to-power over the environment, but other goods, such as the social transformation encouraged by same forms of Calvinism. .

Yet, as the contemporary world faces an ecological crisis of gargantuan proportions, the question can. legitimately be raised whether the tradition of insular theological humanism in the West is equipped to provide those who wish to take theology seriously with the resources they need to deal with the crisis.

It is at this point that the strain of holistic theological humanism in the West may be worthy of increased attention* to begin with , by acknowledging its existence, as Feuerbach and many of his fellow travelers have not. The originating vision of biblical faith did focus on human life, but only in the broader milieu of a cosmos that was full of goodness, fecundity, and mystery of its own, that was

intended by God to attain its own eschatological fulfil-
ment, elicited by the continuing care and nurtue of
God, a cosmos that was created by God not just as a
temporary setting for human life, but as a permanent
home worthy of care, respect, and wonder. This holistic
perspective has never been lost over the centuries, and
from time to time it has been revived. It may still
be ready for renewal, with insights that the Western
world sorely needs today.

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