

Volume XIII Number 1

Spring 1990

KING'S

Theological Review

Preserving God's Creation. Three lectures on Theology and Ecology. III <i>John D. Zizioulas</i>	1
Spirituality and the status quo <i>Grace M Jantzen</i>	6
On calling Islam 'Medieval' <i>David Martin</i>	11
The Academic's Dream <i>Peter Cameron</i>	14
The Resurrection — A new essay in Biblical Theology <i>Jeremy Moiser</i>	16
BOOK REVIEWS	20
FACULTY NEWS Insert	

PRESERVING GOD'S CREATION

JOHN D ZIZIOULAS

LECTURE THREE

INTRODUCTION

In our previous lecture we saw how the Christian Church through her main theological representatives in the early centuries viewed the world as God's creation. Against Gnosticism she stressed the view that God the Father Himself, through His own two hands, the Son and the Spirit, as St Irenaeus put it, created the material universe freely and out of love. Against the Platonists and pagan Greek thought in general she emphasized that the world was created out of 'nothing', in the absolute sense of the word, thus ruling out any natural affinity between God and creation and at the same time any view of the world as eternal, co-existing with the only eternal and immortal being which is God. This is another way of saying that the world is contingent, that it might not have existed at all, and that its existence is a *free gift*, not a necessity.

But the view that the world came out of nothing in this absolute sense and that it has no natural affinity with the eternal and ever-lasting God has its logical and existential consequence. It means that creation is under the constant threat of a return to nothingness, a threat which all particular beings which make it up experience as decay and death. The fear of death, so widespread in creation, implicit in every creature's attempt to survive at all costs, is not a fear of the *suffering* death can cause, but of the return to nothingness that it involves. Creation as a whole, too, taken in itself is subject to extinction. Natural scientists today seem to say this, as they also seem to be endorsing the view - or at least not excluding it - that the universe came out of nothing. Both logically and existentially the doctrine of the creation of the world out of nothing implies that the world *can* be extinguished, for it has no natural capacity for survival.

But Christian faith goes hand in hand with hope and love. If God created the world out of love - for what other motive can we attribute to Him, knowing what He has done for the world? - there must be hope for the world's survival. But how? A simple, perhaps simplistic, answer to this might be that since God is almighty He can simply order things to happen so that the world may survive in spite of its contingency. In other words, miracle working could save the world. Perhaps this is the answer given by most people in the face of apocalypse. But Christian faith does not believe in *Deus ex machina* solutions. We cannot, like the ancient Greeks, introduce divine intervention at the end of a tragedy in which everything moves with mathematical accuracy to destruction. God did not, in creating the world, leave it without the means for its survival. In creating it He provided also for its survival. What does this mean?

Towards the end of our previous lecture we insisted that we cannot introduce solutions to the problem of the survival of creation which are logically inconsistent with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and all that this involves. Above all we cannot introduce into the world natural capacities for survival. We said before concluding that the solution of the problem lies in the creation of Man. Today we shall try to see how and why the human being is understood by the Christian faith to be capable of performing such a role. We shall thus arrive at some idea of

what we intended when in our first lecture we called Man the 'priest of creation'. On the basis of this we shall then try to draw some final conclusions concerning the relation between theology and the ecological problem.

I. What is Man?

In our first lecture we referred to Darwinism as a helpful reaction against the view, widespread since the Middle Ages in particular and also long before that, that the human being is superior to the rest of creation because of the intellect it possesses. This had several consequences including the following. On the one hand it implied that, in the scale of beings, the highest ones after God - in a sense the link between God and creation - are the *angels*, owing to their spiritual and non-corporeal nature. On the other hand this view implies that it is in and through Man's *reason* that the world can be joined to God and thus survive. Even today the idea of Man as 'the priest of creation' is understood by some in terms of rationality. Man's task is understood as being 'to interpret the books of nature, to understand the universe in its wonderful structure and harmonies and to bring it all into orderly articulation... Theological and natural science each has its proper objective to pursue but their work inevitably overlaps, for both operate *through the rational structures of space and time...*' (T.F. Torrance).

Such a view of Man's distinctive identity and role in creation in terms of rationality has contributed a great deal to the creation of the ecological problem, as we noted in our first lecture. For rationality can be used in both directions: it can be used as a means of referring creation to the Creator in a doxological attitude - and it is apparently this that the above mentioned view of 'priest of creation' intends - but it can also be used as an argument for turning creation towards Man, which is the source of the ecological problem. In fact, in this culture of ours in which the rules of the game are set by the Enlightenment, the discussion of whether it is more 'rational' to refer creation to God or to Man can lead nowhere except to a reinforcement of the presupposition laid down by the Enlightenment that reason is all that matters. In any case, Darwinism dealt a blow to this presupposition with regard to the distinctive characteristic of the human being. Man's particular identity in relation to the rest of the animals does not lie in reason, since lower animals also possess reason and consciousness to a lower degree. If we wish to establish the specific characteristic of the human being which no animal possesses, we should look for it elsewhere, not in rationality.

Before we discuss what the Christian tradition has to say on this matter let us have a quick look at what the non-theological world seems to us to be saying today on the question of man's particular identity. Very briefly - our time is very limited in this last lecture - a consensus seems to emerge among philosophers today that the human being differs fundamentally from the animals in this particular respect: whereas the animal in facing the world in which it finds itself develops all its - why not call them so? - 'rational' capacities to adjust to it, the human being wishes to create its own world. The animal *discovers*, too, the laws of nature - sometimes even more successfully than the human being. It can also invent ways of tackling the problems raised for it by the environment, and can amaze us at its cleverness. All this man can do, too, even sometimes to a higher degree, as modern technology can show. But the human being alone can create a world of its own with culture, history, etc. Man, for example, can reproduce a tree as *another*,

his or her own personal creation, by painting. Man can create events, institutions, etc., not simply as means for survival or welfare, in the way birds build their nests or bees construct their hives, but as landmarks and points of reference for his own identity. When one says, for example, 'I am English', one does not mean by that simply that he or she lives in a certain geographical area, but a great deal more than that, which has to do with one's identity and creativity, with the emergence, that is, of identities other than what is given by the environment.

Now, all this can be perhaps explained by rationality. Man in his higher degree of rationality compared with that of the animals creates culture, history and civilization. But a lot can be said against this assumption, for the creation of culture involves a far more radical kind of difference between man and animal than what rationality would imply, there is something in man's creativity that we could hardly attribute to rationality, since in fact it is its opposite. Man, and only Man, in creating his own world can go very often against the inherent rationality of nature, of the world given to him: he can even destroy the given world. This is precisely because Man seems to be challenged and provoked by the *given*. In wishing to create his own world or simply to assert his own will he is disturbed by the already existing world. All great artists have experienced this. Michelangelo used to exclaim: when shall I finish with this marble so that I can start doing my own work? And Picasso is reported to have said similar things about forms, shapes and colours. Plato's creator, too, being conceived by the philosopher in *Timaeus*, as an artist, suffers because he has to create out of pre-existing matter and space which impose on him their conditions. No creator can be content with the given. If he succumbs to it, he is frustrated and uneasy as all creative artists in all ages seem to have been. If he does not succumb to it, he has to destroy it and create out of nothing. But as creating ex nihilo can only be the privilege of the uncreated creator, all attempts by man to create his own world, whether in art, history or other areas of civilization, are bound to lead to frustration. There have, of course, been forms of human 'creativity' in history which involved a copying of the world as it is. However, hardly anyone would call such things true art. Whatever involves succumbing to the given, this man has in common with the animals. Whatever is *free* from it, constitutes a sign of the presence of the human. This can lead as far as the *destruction* of the given by man. At this point the human phenomenon emerges even more clearly. For no animal would go against the inherent rationality of nature. Man can do that and in so doing he shows that his specific characteristic is not rationality but something else; it is *freedom*.

What is freedom? We normally use this word in order to indicate the capacity to choose between two or more possibilities. We are free to come or not to come to this lecture; we are free to vote for this or that party, etc. But this is a relative, not an absolute freedom. It is limited by the possibilities *given* to us. And it is this *givenness* that constitutes the greatest provocation to freedom. Why choose between what is given to me and not be free to create my own possibilities? You can see how the question of freedom and that of creation out of nothing are interdependent: if one creates out of something, one is presented by something given; if one creates out of nothing, one is free in the absolute sense of the term.

Now, we saw in our previous lecture that the Church insisted on the idea that God created out of absolute nothing. We can appreciate this fully only if we wish to attach to our

notion of God the absolute sense of freedom: to be God means to be absolutely free in the sense of not being bound or confronted by any situation or reality *given* to you. For if something, even in the form of a possibility, is *given* to you, this implies that someone or something else exists *besides* you, which would rule out any absolutely monotheistic view of God such as the one proclaimed by the Bible.

But what about the human being? Man is by definition a creature. This means that he is presented with a *given*. The fact that in the biblical account of man's creation he emerges at the *end* of the creative process makes the human being doubly restricted: the world is given to him, and God the creator is given to him, too. He can choose what he likes but he cannot avoid the fact of givenness. Is he, therefore, free in an absolute sense?

It is at this point that the idea of the *imago Dei* emerges. Christian anthropology since its earliest days insisted that Man was created 'in the image and likeness of God'. The idea, or rather the expression, appears for the first time in the Old Testament, in the Genesis account of the creation. It is taken up by the Fathers and Christian theology throughout history. Various meanings have been given to this experience, including the one we mentioned earlier which identifies the image of God in man with his reason. Whatever the case may be, one thing must be certain: if we speak of an 'image and likeness of God', we must refer inevitably to something which characterises God in an exclusive way. If the 'imago Dei' consists in something to be found outside God, it is not an image of God. We are talking, therefore, about a quality pertaining to God and not to creation.

This forces us to seek the *imago Dei* in freedom. Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century already defined this idea as the ἀὐτεξουσία (man's freedom to be the master of himself). If this freedom is taken in the way in which it is applied to God - which is what it ought to be if we are talking about an image of God - then, we are talking about absolute freedom in the sense of not being confronted with anything given. But this would be absurd. For man is a creature, and cannot but be confronted with a given.

It is at this point that another category, pertaining exclusively to the definition of the human, emerges: it is *tragedy*, the tragic. Tragedy is the impasse created by a freedom driving towards its fulfilment and being unable to reach it. The tragic applies only to the human condition, it is not applicable either to God or to the rest of creation. It is impossible to have a complete definition of Man without reference to the tragic element, and this is related directly to the subject of freedom. Dostoevsky, that great Christian prophet of modern times, put his finger on this crucial issue when he placed the following words in the mouth of Kirilov, one of the heroes in *The Possessed*:

'Every one who wants to attain complete freedom must be daring enough to kill himself... This is the final limit of freedom, that is all, there is nothing beyond it.. Who dares to kill himself becomes God. Everyone can do this and thus cause God to cease to exist, and then nothing will exist at all'.

If man wishes to be God, he has to cope with the givenness of his own being. As long as he is faced with the fact that he is 'created', which means that his being is given to him, he cannot

be said to be free in the absolute sense.

Yet man in so many ways manifests his desire to attain to such an absolute freedom; it is in fact precisely this that distinguishes him from the animals. Why did God give him such an unfulfillable drive? In fact many people would wish for themselves as well as for others that they were not free in this absolute sense. The Christian Church herself has produced throughout the centuries devices by the effect of which man, particularly the Christian, would be so tamed and so domesticated that he would give up all claims to absolute freedom, leaving such claims only to God. But certainly, if God gave such a drive to Man, if He made him in His own image, He must have had a purpose. We suggest that this purpose has to do precisely with the survival of creation, with Man's call to be 'the priest of creation'. But before we come to see how this can be envisaged let us see how in fact Man applied this drive and how creation has been affected by that.

II. Man's Failure

Christian anthropology speaks of the first Man, Adam, as having been placed in Paradise with the order to exercise dominion over creation. That he was supposed to do this in and through his *freedom* is implied by the fact that he was presented with a decision to obey or disobey a certain commandment by God (not to eat from a certain tree, etc.). This commandment involved the invitation to exercise the freedom implied in the *imago Dei*, i.e. to act as if man were God. This Adam did, and the result is well known. We call it, in theological language, the *Fall of man*.

At this point the question arises: why did Man fall by exercising what God Himself had given him, namely freedom? Would it have been better for him and for creation had he not exercised, but rather sacrificed and abolished this absolute kind of freedom? Would it not perhaps have been better for all of us if Adam had been content with a relative freedom as befits a creature? Did the tragedy of the Fall consist in the *excess* of the limits of human freedom?

The answer commonly given to these questions is a positive one: yes, Adam exceeded the limits of his freedom, and this is why he fell. It is for this reason that Adam's Fall is commonly associated with Adam's *fault*, a fault understood therefore forensically: Man should not exceed his limits, if he wishes to avoid punishment.

Now, this sort of attitude to the Fall of Man provokes immediately two reactions. The first is that it reminds one immediately of ancient Greek thought. We all know, I suppose, the Greek word *ὑβρισ*, by which the ancient Greeks indicated that the human being 'falls', i.e. sins and is punished, every time he exceeds his limits and tries to be God. This of course does not prove in itself that the Christian view of things ought to be different from the that of the ancient Greeks. It simply warns us that something may be wrong with the above interpretation of the Fall. The real difficulty comes from the question; if Adam ought not to exercise an absolute freedom, why did God give him the drive towards it?

We have to seek ways of interpreting the fall other than the one involving a blame on Adam for having exceeded the limits of his freedom. We shall have, perhaps, to abandon forensic categories of guilt. It may be more logical, more consistent with our view of the *imago Dei*, if we followed not St Augustine but St Irenaeus in this respect.

St Irenaeus took a very 'philanthropic', a very compassionate view of Adam's Fall. He thought of him as a child placed in Paradise in order to grow to adulthood by exercising his freedom. But he was deceived and did the wrong thing. What does this mean? It means that it was not a question of exceeding the limits of freedom. It was rather a question of applying absolute freedom in the wrong way. That is very different from saying that Adam ought to adjust the drive of his freedom to his creaturely limitations. For had he adjusted his freedom this way, he would have lost the drive to absolute freedom, whereas now he can still have it but re-adjust and re-orientate it.

The implications of what we are saying here are far-reaching and cannot be properly discussed in the time available to us. They include all sorts of consequences for legalistic views of sin, which not by accident go hand in hand with cries for relativized freedom. But we shall limit ourselves to the implications that have to do directly with our subject, which is the survival of creation through man. Man was given the drive to absolute freedom, the *imago Dei*, not for himself but for creation. How are we to understand this?

III Man, the hope of all creation.

We have already noted that creation does not possess any natural means of survival. This means that if left to itself, it would die. The only way to avoid this would be communion with the eternal God. This, however, would require a movement of *transcendence* beyond the boundaries of creation. It would require, in other words, *freedom* in the absolute sense. If creation were to attempt its survival only by obedience to God, in sense of its realizing, so to say, its own limitations and not attempting to transcend them, its survival would require the miracle of the *Deus ex machina* intervention, of which we spoke earlier. This would have to result in a claim which would bear no logical relation to the rest of doctrine, as is precisely the case with all *Deus ex machina* solutions. If we accept the view that the world needs to transcend itself in order to survive (which is the logical consequence of having accepted that the world had a beginning), we need to find a way of achieving this transcendence. This is what the *imago Dei* was given for.

The transcendence of the limits of creation, which is, I repeat, the condition for its survival, requires on the part of creation a drive to absolute freedom. The fact that this drive was given to Man made the whole creation rejoice, in the words of St Paul 'awaiting with eager expectation the revelation of the glory of the children of God', i.e. of Man. Because Man, unlike the angels (who are also regarded as endowed with freedom) forms an organic part of the material world, being the highest point in its evolution, he is able to carry with him the whole creation to its transcendence. The fact that the human being is also an *animal*, as Darwin has reminded us, far from being an insult to the human race, constitutes - in spite, perhaps, of Darwin's intentions - the *sine qua non* condition for his glorious mission in creation. If man gave up his claim to absolute freedom, the whole creation would automatically lose its hope for survival. This allows us to say that it is better that Adam fell by retaining his claim to absolute freedom, than that he had remained unfallen by renouncing this claim, thus reducing himself to an animal. In this way of understanding the Fall it is not right to speak of 'total depravity' of the image of God. Man in his negative attitude to God still exercises the claim to absolute freedom, albeit against his own good and that of creation. For in fact only such a claim can cause a revolt against God.

But how can Man liberate creation from its boundaries and lead it to survival through his freedom? At this point Christian theology has to rely on its doctrinal resources rather heavily, yet we shall try to do so in such a way as to avoid as far as possible making it a matter of an 'esoteric' language understood only by those who have access to it by virtue of their doctrinal commitment.

IV. Man's Priesthood.

We have already referred to man's tendency to create a new world. This tendency constitutes his specific characteristic compared with the animals and, in this sense, it is an essential expression of the image of God in him. If analysed deeply this means that man wishes to pass through his own hands everything that exists and make it his own. This can result in one of the following possibilities:

a) Making it 'his own' may mean that man can use creation for his own benefit, in which case by being placed in man's hands creation is not truly lifted to the level of the human, but subjected to it. This is one of the ways in which man can understand God's commandment to have dominion over the earth: it could be called the *utilitarian way*.

Now, an analysis of this situation yields the following implications:

(i) Theologically speaking man would become the ultimate point of reference in existence, i.e. become God.

(ii) Anthropologically speaking man would cut himself off from nature as if he did not belong to it himself. The utilitarian attitude to creation would then go hand in hand with the view that man differs from the rest of creation by way of his capacity to *dissociate* himself from it rather than to *associate* himself with it. It would also go together with the possibility of denying God and divinising man. Atheism and man's dissociation from nature would thus be shown to be inter-connected. They both spring from the *imago Dei* and confirm the view that the difference between man and creation relates to the question of freedom. Needless to say, the ecological problem has its philosophy rooted deeply in this kind of anthropology. An understanding of the world as man's *possession* – as a means of drawing from it self-satisfaction and pleasure – this is what taking the world in man's hands means in this case. Science and technology then signify the employment of man's intellectual superiority for the purpose of discovering ways and means by which man may draw the biggest possible profit from creation for his own purposes. In this case, a theology based on the assumption that the essence of man lies in his intellect would be co-responsible with science and technology for the ecological problem.

b) Making the world pass through the hands of man may mean something entirely different from what we have just described. In this second case the utilitarian element would not arise. Of course man would still use creation as a source from which he would draw the basic elements necessary for his creation as a source for his life, such as food, clothing, building of houses, etc. But to all this he would give a dimension which we could call *personal*. What does the personal dimension involve?

The person as distinct from the individual is marked by the following characteristics:

(i) He cannot be understood in isolation but only in relation to something or someone else. A personal approach to creation as distinct from an individualistic one would regard the human being as someone whose particular identity arises from his relation with what is not human. This could be both or either God and/or creation (We shall see in a minute what is involved in each of these possibilities.) It is not, therefore, in juxtaposition to nature but in association with it that man would find his specific identity. Man would be other than nature not by separating himself from it but by relating himself to it. This will become immediately evident in culture: the way man eats or is dressed or builds his houses would involve a close relationship with what is not human, with what is significantly called 'the environment'. A personal approach to creation would thus elevate the material world to the level of man's existence. The material creation would be in this way liberated from its own limitations and by being placed in the hands of man, it would itself acquire a personal dimension; it would be *humanised*.

(ii) The personal dimension, as distinct from the individual one, involves what we may call *hypostatisation* and *catholicity*. These terms are technical in theology but they can be easily translated into non-theological language. A *hypostasis* is an identity which embodies and expresses in itself the totality of nature. To take an example, killing someone could be regarded as a crime against the totality of human nature, whereas in fact it is only a crime against a particular individual. In this case it could be argued that murder would be more 'rationally' and perhaps more efficiently prevented in a society which does not appeal to the rationality of the 'rights of the individual', but which has a view of each human being as the hypostasis of the totality of human nature. (Trinitarian doctrine can be particularly meaningful and relevant in this case.) The personal approach makes every being unique and irreplaceable, whereas the individual approach makes of it a number in statistics. If man acts as a person rather than an individual in treating creation, he not only lifts it up to the level of the human, but he sees it as a totality, as a catholicity of interrelated entities. Creation is thus able to fulfil the unity which, as natural science observes today, is inherent in its very structure.

Now, all this the human being can do without needing God, or any reference to Him. Certainly, in the utilitarian, approach God is not needed except in the best of cases, and then only in order to be thanked for what He has given us to have dominion over and enjoy – a verbal and rationalistic or sentimental thanksgiving; like the one we find in so much of Christian tradition. But in the personal approach things cannot stop with man, they cry aloud for a reference to God. Why?

If we look at what the story of Adam's Fall implies for creation, we notice that the most serious consequence of this Fall was death. It is normally understood, ever since St Augustine influenced our thinking, that death came to creation as a punishment for Adam's disobedience. This, however, implies a great deal of unacceptable things. It would mean that God Himself introduced this horrible evil which He then tried through His Son to remove. Also, it would seem to imply that before the arrival of Man in creation, there was no death at all. This latter assumption would contradict the entire theory of evolution in creation, and would also make it cruel and absurd on the part of the Creator to punish all creatures for what one of them did.

These difficulties lead us to the conclusion that the view of

Irenaeus, Maximus the Confessor *et al.* is more reasonable on all counts, including the theory of evolution. This view sees creation as being from the beginning in a state of mortality - owing, as we argued last time, to its having had a beginning - and as awaiting the arrival of Man in order to overcome this predicament. Adam's Fall brought about death not as a new thing in creation but as the inability to overcome the mortality inherent in it.

If we take Adam's Fall to consist in his making man the ultimate point of reference in creation, we can easily see why death entered into it through his Fall: it was because Adam himself was a creature and creation, being subjected ultimately to Man, could not overcome its limitations, including that of mortality. But this could have been avoided, had Man acted as the Priest of Creation.

The personhood in Man demands constantly that creation be treated as something destined by God not only to survive but also to be "fulfilled" in and through Man's hands. There are two basic dimensions in personhood, both of which enable the human being to fulfil his role as the link between God and creation. One is what we may call its *hypostatic* aspect, through which the world is integrated and embodied into a unified reality. The other is what we can call its *ecstatic* aspect by virtue of which the world by being referred to God and offered to Him as 'His own' reaches itself to infinite possibilities. This constitutes the basis of what we can call Man's *priesthood*. By taking the world into his hands and creatively integrating it and by referring it to God, Man liberates creation from its limitations and lets it truly be. Thus, in being the Priest of creation man is also a creator, and, perhaps, we may say that in all of his truly creative activities there is hidden a para-priestly character. In speaking of 'priesthood', therefore, we speak of a broader existential attitude encompassing all human activities that involve a conscious or even unconscious manifestation of these two aspects of personhood: the *hypo-static* and the *ec-static*, as we have just described them.

To put all this in terms of Christian doctrine, we Christians believe that what Adam failed to do Christ did. We regard Christ as the embodiment or *anakephalaiosis* of all creation and, therefore, as the Man *par excellence* and the saviour of the world. We regard Him, because of this, as the true "image of God" and we associate Him with the final fate of the world. We, therefore, believe that in the person of Christ the world possesses its Priest of Creation, the model of Man's proper relation to the natural world.

On the basis of this belief, we form a community which takes from this creation certain elements (the bread and the wine) which we offer to God with the solemn declaration "Thine own of thine own we offer unto Thee", thus recognizing that creation does not belong to us but to God, who is its only 'owner'. By so doing we believe that creation is brought into relation with God and not only is it treated with the reverence that befits what belongs to God, but it is also liberated from its natural limitations and is transformed into a bearer of life. We believe that in doing this 'in Christ' we, like Christ, act as priests of creation. When we receive these elements back, after having referred them to God, we believe that because of this reference to God we can take them back and consume them no longer as death but as life. Creation acquires for us in this way a sacredness which is not inherent in its nature but 'acquired' in and through Man's free exercise of his *imago Dei*, i.e. his personhood. This distinguishes our

attitude from all forms of paganism, and attaches to the human being an awesome responsibility for the survival of God's creation.

All of this is a belief and a practice which cannot be imposed on anyone else, and may easily be mistaken for sheer ritualism. Nevertheless we believe that all of this involves an *ethos* that the world needs badly in our time. Not an ethic, but an *ethos*. Not a programme, but an attitude and a mentality. Not a legislation, but a culture.

* * *

It seems that the ecological crisis is a crisis of culture. It is a crisis that has to do with the loss of the *sacrality* of nature in our culture. I can see only two ways of overcoming this. One would be the way of *paganism*. The pagan regards the world as sacred because it is permeated by divine presence; he therefore respects it (to the point of worshipping it explicitly or implicitly) and does not do damage to it. But equally, he never worries about its fate: he believes in its eternity. He is also unaware of any need for transformation of nature or transcendence of its limitations: the world is good as it stands and possesses in its nature all that is necessary for its survival.

The other way is what we have tried to describe here as being the Christian way. The Christian regards the world as sacred because it stands in dialectical relationship with God; thus he respects it (without worshipping it, since it has no divine presence *in its nature*), but he regards the human being as the only possible link between God and creation, a link that can either bring nature to communion with God and thus sanctify it, or turn it ultimately towards Man - or nature itself - and condemn it to the state of a 'thing' the meaning and purpose of which are exhausted with the satisfaction of Man.

Of these two ways it is the second one that attaches to man a heavy responsibility for the fate of creation. The first one sees Man as *part* of the world; the second, by considering Man to be the crucial link between the world and God, sees him as the only *person* in creation, i.e. as the only one who would be so deeply respectful of the impersonal world as not simply to 'preserve' it but to cultivate and embody it in forms of culture which will elevate it to eternal survival. Unless we decide to return to paganism, this seems to be the only way to respect once again the sacrality of nature and face the ecological crisis. For it is now clear that the model of human domination over nature, such as we have it in our present day technological ethos, will no longer do for the survival of God's creation.