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## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In the last two years all the political parties of our country have taken on board a topic that was never mentioned in their manifestos a decade ago: the environment. They have good reason to. The shock of 15% of the electorate voting for the Green Party in the European elections of June 1989 first gave credibility to the realisation that people do care for the environment, and that this is not just the local problems of the fouling of footpaths and the litter blowing around public squares: it is proving to be a deep-seated concern for what is happening to our planet.

In an ICM poll taken in July this year<sup>1</sup> people were asked what they thought were the serious problems facing the country today. The Poll Tax came top of the league (68%) but was immediately followed by the environment (52%), far above the hitherto common concerns about law and order, unemployment, the economy and education. In interviews I am often asked whether the current concern about the environment is a 'flash in the pan' created by the attention given to it in the media. There is little doubt that television pictures of the encroaching desert generating hunger in Ethiopia or of programmes that describe the threats to endangered species hit the recesses of the mind and do not go away. Our fellow citizens are not being fooled: they realise that something must lie behind all of this, and it is not purely 'media hype'. What they still do not appreciate is the scale of the destruction or the urgency of the situation. It is worse than they believe.

Is the problem really as serious as popular scientists like David Bellamy and presenters like Jonathon Porritt make out? We could do no better than to turn to the United Nations Environment Programme which carefully tabulates the data year by year. Its most recent report comes to the stark conclusion that not only are we facing a collapse of the carefully balanced environmental systems but that this will lead inevitably to human suffering on an unprecedented scale:

If the world continues to accept disappearing tree cover, land degradation, the expansion of the deserts, the loss of plant and animal species, air and water pollution, and the changing chemistry of the atmosphere it will also have to accept economic decline and social disintegration. In a world where progress depends upon a complex set of national and international ties, such disintegration would bring human suffering on a scale that has no precedent.<sup>2</sup>

### PROGRESS

In the middle of that quotation is the word 'progress'. Progress is not what it was. Each year the Worldwatch Institute publishes its *Report on the Progress Towards a Sustainable Society* and in its 1990 edition its Editor, Lester R. Brown, heads the report with a chapter on 'The Illusion of Progress'. It is worth quoting at some length:

For most of the nearly four fifths of humanity born since World War II, life has seemed to be a period of virtually uninterrupted economic progress. Since mid-Century, the global economic product has nearly quintupled. On average, the additional economic output in each of the last four decades has matched that added from the beginning of civilisation until 1950.

World food output during this period also grew at a record pace. Soaring demand fuelled by population growth and rising affluence provided the incentive, and modern technology the means, to multiply the world's grain harvest 2.6 times since mid-century. No other generation

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has witnessed gains even remotely approaching this.

Such gains would seem to be a cause for celebration, but instead there is a sense of illusion, a feeling that they overstate progress. The system of national accounting [has not taken into account] the depletion of natural capital. Since mid-century, the world has lost nearly one-fifth of the topsoil from its cropland, a fifth of its tropical rain forests, and tens of thousands of its plant and animal species.

During the same period, atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have increased by 13 per cent, setting the stage for hotter summers. The protective ozone layer in the stratosphere has been depleted by 2 per cent worldwide and far more over Antarctica. Dead lakes and dying forests have become a natural accompaniment of industrialisation. Historians in the twenty-first century may marvel at this economic performance - and sorrow over its environmental consequences.<sup>3</sup>

The report then goes on to give detail of the reasons for this change in outlook. The greatest single change is the booming human population: whereas there were less than two billion (i.e. two thousand million) of us at the turn of this century, we passed the five billion mark in 1987 and are adding to our numbers at the rate of a million every four days, with the likelihood that the present population will be doubled within less than a hundred years from now. As a result the world is adding 90 million hungry mouths to its population every year and there are at least fifty countries in which human numbers are growing faster than national incomes, so that people are becoming poorer and hungrier.<sup>4</sup>

So we need more food, and the bulk of this must come from the arable areas of our planet. Environmental degradation is starting to show up at harvest time. We are currently losing just under five tons of topsoil for every man, woman and child living each year, and with evidence that air pollution is damaging crops our ability to feed ourselves is now diminishing for the first time this century.

To quote Lester Brown again:

Throughout our lifetimes, economic trends have shaped environmental trends, often altering the earth's natural resources and systems in ways not obvious at the time. Now, as we enter the nineties, the reverse is also beginning to happen: environmental trends are beginning to shape economic trends.<sup>5</sup>

How are we going to react to these changes? Has the Church anything to say in this context? It is a context into which it is being thrust whether it likes it or not, and sometimes the questions are coming from the most unexpected quarters. Only this month in a radio interview my interlocutor, having got me to give a very brief outline of the deteriorating environment, suddenly bowled a low ball: 'And what difference is all this having upon the Church's doctrine of creation and God as creator?' That would not have been too difficult to answer if I had not known that he wanted a snappy reply and, before we began recording, had remarked that the audience for this magazine programme was a 'sort of Radio 2 audience: assume a mental age of about 13 to 15'.

One of the encouraging signs has been the recent burgeoning of books that are attempting to relate Christian faith to 'green' issues.<sup>5</sup>

Let us take up some of the aspects of environmentalists' concerns and see how we can respond to them.

## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

### HUMAN POPULATION

There is little doubt that the most pressing problem is the growth of the human population. It therefore comes hard when we appreciate that the very first command given to mankind in the Genesis 1 account of creation is 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth' (1.28 REB). We have more than fulfilled this command! Indeed, we have not subdued the earth so much as overwhelmed it.

The setting of the telling of this first story of creation was a world in which the human population was relatively small, surrounded by the immensities of creation. Indeed, that very creation was part of the provision of a caring God who enables man to sustain himself and to gain progeny: 'Throughout the earth I give you all plants that bear seed, and every tree that bears fruit with seed: they shall be yours for food' (Gen.1.29 REB). This vegetarian diet was not to reflect a struggle for existence: animals were not made part of man's provision until the covenant with Noah (Gen.9.3).

Why is the human population booming? There are a number of factors. Whatever our culture and religion, children are seen as a blessing of God: the Bible is not alone in setting down that children are the mark of the righteous (e.g. Job 42.12-16). In more practical terms, improved hygiene, a wider range of drugs to combat disease, and advances in medical practice have meant that the wealthier countries of the world can sustain their population to a greater age. Historically we exported our excess of population, filling up the emptier lands. The traditional cry of 'Go West, my son!' sufficed during the last century, but now there are no wests left for anyone to go to. But greater wealth and less likelihood of infant mortality have also meant that the industrialised countries have now virtually stabilised their populations: it is significantly the poorer countries that are suffering from human growth.

Another under-riding reason for large families is that parents see their future security in their children and grandchildren providing for them in their old age, and commonly when only three out of five children will survive into their 'teens there is a pressure to cultivate a large family. The Governments of the Third World are not unaware of the problem: with four-fifths of all people in the world living in the less developed world by the end of this century and their numbers expected to double in the next thirty years, what hope will there be of enough food, homes, jobs, schools and doctors?<sup>4</sup> Enforced means of birth control are not the answer: in China this has only been achieved under a tyrannical form of government, and in India it proved to be political suicide for Rajiv Gandhi. Nor is birth control universally commended by the Church: the Orthodox and Catholic traditions are averse to it. The one hope is ameliorating conditions of living and improved education: it is notable that within India the lowest birthrate is in Kerala, which is by no means the wealthiest state, but it does have a much higher rate of literacy, particularly among its women.

### THE DIVIDE BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

What does emerge from these considerations is the great divide between rich and poor, and about that there is plenty of Biblical comment. There is serious injunction for any society to care for the aliens, widows and fatherless 'when the Lord your God has blessed you with prosperity' (Deut. 14.24 REB), and the strongest of condemnations for those who live in wealth whilst the needs of the poor go untended. Indeed, Amos saves up some of his strongest expletives for them:

Listen to this word,  
you Bashan cows on the hill of Samaria,

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who oppress the helpless and grind down the poor. (Amos 4.1)

Ronald Sider has taken up this theme in *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. The class divisions at Corinth horrified Paul: he learned that wealthy Christians were feasting at the eucharistic celebration while poor believers went hungry. Paul angrily denied that they were eating the Lord's Supper at all (I Cor. 11.20-22). He said that they did not discern Christ's body. What did he mean by that? Discernment of the body of Christ, the body of believers, the fellowship, leads to a total responsibility of the welfare of all. It is incompatible with feasting while other members of the body go hungry.<sup>6</sup>

Yet we live in an age when the Christians of the developed nations feast and have far more food than they really need while their brethren in the developing and under-developed nations go hungry. Are we in danger of not discerning the body of the Lord, not being sensitive to what he in his love for all his children would have us do? Those who are rich have a heavy responsibility.

We have to realise that it is not just wealth in the provision of food that the North has secured at the expense of the South. Our industrial plants have been developed for over a century and have used up, and continue to consume, vast quantities of mineral wealth. We are beginning to realise that many of the rich ores of the planet are gone, and we are having to exploit the poorer ones to satisfy our demand for a host of metals and elements. When these have gone, Mother Hubbard's cupboard will be bare. This scenario is not comfortably in the future over some distant horizon: it is already with us. We have already effectively exhausted all our ores of mercury: we are critically short of tin, copper and sulphur. The supplies of lead, manganese, silver and zinc ores are reaching their limits, and, indeed, we have only got through the last two decades because we have found alternatives for many of the traditional uses of these elements.

When an ore is exhausted, then scarcity causes the value of its mineral or metal to rise. This means that the poorer ores that were previously left untouched can be economically exploited; recycling waste material can also be profitable, though attention has to be given here to the 'energy bill' as this is a significant part of all recycling operations. Thus the supply does not come to an abrupt end: the death throes are delayed, but the price is higher. In effect, this is the equivalent of putting the supply on a higher shelf in the cupboard: the poorer nations do not have the pecuniary muscle to reach it.

Our time is different from any other period in history because of the rates at which we use resources. The rate at which a highly industrialised wealthy nation can gobble up precious materials is staggering. The classic example is that of the United States: at the height of its economic boon in the early 1970s a report to the US Senate indicated that in the decade between 1959 and 1969 the American people consumed more of the earth's resources than the whole of the rest of the world had consumed in all of recorded history - in ten years.<sup>7</sup>

Before any country can develop an industrial base, and follow that with the provision of health care and education at all levels, it is critically dependent upon its energy supply. Many of the under-developed countries in the world lack any native source of fossil fuels: coal, oil and natural gas. Even at the current rates of use, we estimate that our worldwide supplies of oil and gas will be in extremely short supply, if not exhausted, by the middle of the next century. We in the North may well wonder how we shall continue to run our societies without them. But what of the South? They have received a diminishing proportion of the cake over the years: if any begin to establish that industrial base, will there be any of the energy and ore cake left over for them? The moral is clear. It was certainly seen to be clear in an

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agricultural society. 'When you reap the harvest in your land, do not reap right up to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your crop. Leave them for the poor and for the alien. I am the Lord your God' (Lev. 23.22; 19.9-10). We are leaving no resources to the poorer world. The stories about Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21) and of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.19-31) take on a new significance.

### TO HAVE DOMINION

The second part of the directive given to mankind at creation was 'subdue the earth and ..... have dominion over ..... every living thing' (Gen. 1.28 REB). Christianity is often accused of interpreting this verse in terms of unrestrained domination. Whatever translation is used, words like 'subdue', 'rule over', or 'have dominion' need careful attention. It is not that they should be explained away: they carry a forcefulness which cannot be ducked. The Hebrew word *kabash*, from which 'subdue' is derived, suggests a treading down, or conquering, and the term *radah* which gives us 'rule' resembles the verb to trample.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas was clear that there was a hierarchy within creation: plants were for the benefit of animals, and plants and animals for the benefit of mankind: 'lifeless beings exist for living beings, plants for animals, and the latter for man' such that 'the life of animals and plants is preserved not for themselves but for man'.<sup>9</sup>

This historical viewpoint is seen as being worked out with wanton exploitation as man subjects nature for his own often selfish purposes. An obvious example is the destruction of species. The proliferation of species within our planet is staggering: whereas until relatively recently biologists believed that the total number of species was about five million, a study of the canopy of the tropical rainforest has caused a revision of that figure in the last three years: it is now believed that the number of species must be at least thirty million. Thus far we have only catalogued 1.4 million. Modern farming-techniques involve rooting up of hedgerows, thus destroying habitat, and spraying with pesticides and herbicides, thus directly destroying life and removing elements in the food chain of many creatures; the torching of the rain forest to clear land for agriculture is particularly damaging as it is there that there is such a proliferation of species. All this means that the loss of species, even on a conservative estimate, must already be at the rate of one every half-hour.

Yet the understanding of dominion to mean dominance was challenged centuries ago. In 1691 John Ray, the English naturalist, published *The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation*: he set aside the highly anthropocentric understanding of creation and the teleological argument derived from Cicero and Grew common in his day, and explicitly denies 'the generally received opinion that man is the end of the creation as if there were no other end of any creature but some way or other to be serviceable to man'.<sup>10</sup>

If we recognise God's presence in all creation, and that the very abundance of species is a mark of God's overwhelming grace and that God takes pleasure in his creation (Gen. 1.31) we shall also recognise that all living things have a value in themselves and to God, and that they are more than merely objects for our pleasure or instruments for human purposes.<sup>11</sup>

The best commentary on scripture is nearly always scripture itself. The second creation story in Genesis sets down that it is our responsibility on Earth 'to till it and look after it' (Gen. 2.15 REB). The Hebrew words are very revealing: *abad* means to work in the sense of serving (the equivalent noun means servant or slave), and *shamar* suggests a watchful care and preservation. We are to serve the needs of the Earth and preserve it.<sup>12</sup>

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The writer of Psalm 8 is caught in the tension of realising the infinitesimal smallness of man compared to his creator:

When I look up at your heavens, the work of your fingers .....  
what is a frail mortal, that you should be mindful of him?

and the staggering generosity of God in placing him in charge of all creation:

Yet you have made him little less than a god;  
you make him master over all that you have made,  
putting everything in subjection under his feet. (vv.3,5,6 REB)

To be 'little less than a god', to be 'made in the image of God', is to have the same care for creation as God himself, the God who has concern over every sparrow that falls to the ground (Matt. 10.29).<sup>13</sup> So the proper relationship between mankind and the rest of creation is that of steward, with serious accountability towards the owner.

### SOIL

This accountability extends beyond that of living creatures to the earth itself, for

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it (Ps.24.1, NIV).

Perhaps the most precious commodity given to us is that of soil, for without its fertility we cannot cultivate plants and grow crops, nor can we feed livestock: without it we cannot begin to solve the present and the every-increasing problem of finding food to satisfy the needs of our expanding population. Yet, as we have already observed, we are losing soil at an alarming rate.

To generate more areas of cultivable land, we are cutting down and burning forest, transforming the whole nature of the Earth's surface. Originally about 14% of the land surface was covered by forest: that has now been halved. In 1987 an astonishing eight million hectares of the Amazonian forest, an area about the size of Austria, were burned down.<sup>14</sup> Put another way, it is estimated that we are destroying an area of tropical forest equivalent to 1.5 times the size of England each year.<sup>15</sup> At this level of destruction the whole of the Amazonian forest will have been destroyed within 25 years. The bitterest aspect of it all is that as likely as not the cleared land will lose its fertility within ten years because of erosion and degradation, and become useless semi-desert, adding its own twist to the deteriorating climatic conditions. The loss of soil continues.

Even the soil that we retain is at hazard. Pollution from industrial acidic gases in the atmosphere can poison the soil: the commonest feature is the 'acid rain' in which a complex sequence of chemical reactions can lead to the loss of forest foliage and the destruction of fish in lakes. Herbicides and insecticides can have side-effects on plant and animal life undreamed of when they were first developed. But the greatest threat of all is the 'greenhouse effect': we anticipate that the warming of the Earth's atmosphere will trigger climatic changes that will bring a stark reduction of rainfall on many tropical and temperate regions, including the great plains of North America and the Ukraine that have hitherto proved to be the breadbasket of the world. Average worldwide temperatures are expected to increase by at least 1.3°C by 2030, and 3°C by the year 2070, and four degrees is the difference between now and the last Ice Age. The estimated change in temperature in the next eighty years is greater than that experienced in the last 10,000 years; the warmest six years of this century

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all occurred in the last decade. The rate of climatic change is expected to be so great that many native species will not adapt to it with sufficient speed to survive, incurring a further toll on the number of nature's species that are lost to us. It is a stark scenario, justifiably dubbed 'the world's most serious problem'.<sup>16</sup>

Biblically mankind is called upon to tend the soil and care for it. That care for the land was exemplified in the sabbath principle: not only was man to rest every seventh day, but the land was to lie fallow every seven years:

For six years you may sow your fields and prune your vineyards and gather the harvest, but in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbatical rest ..... It is to be a year of rest for the land. (Lev. 25.3-5 REB; cf. Exod. 23.10-11)

During this seventh year the land was expected to regain its fertility. We have no real evidence that this principle was widely adopted: indeed, it must have been widely breached as the land was allowed to keep the aliquot of sabbaths during the Babylonian exile (2 Chron. 36.21) that had been forbidden it hitherto. The exile was to be seen as part of the punishment for a lack of observation of the law:

All the time that [your land] lies desolate, while you are in exile among your enemies, your land will enjoy its sabbaths to the full. All the time of its desolation it will have its sabbath rest which it did not have while you were living there. (Lev. 26.34-35 REB)

With hindsight it is interesting to contemplate what would have happened if this principle had been adopted. Certainly we know from modern agricultural practice that an over-use of the land can lead to a diminishing fertility, but that is more commonly due to an extraction of micro-nutrients that can only be replenished by the addition of fertilisers or the ploughing in of compost. Left for long periods, most land loses fertility, and in extreme cases will revert to desert (cf. Lev. 26.33). More particularly, whereas in the wet winter months of our own mid-latitudes there can be good reason for allowing the land to lie exposed to the elements, encouraging the break-up of the soil and the generation of frost tilth, in drier climes this is a disastrous practice. We have learned the hard way that monocrop cultivation with a period in between crops when the soil lies exposed to sun, wind and torrential downpour guarantees erosion. The multicrop processes now being developed are not purely to increase the yield from the land in any one year: two or three crops are grown each year so that, while one is about to be harvested, another is growing up underneath, thus ensuring that there is always foliar cover for the soil. Part of the disaster suffered in the tropics has been the importation of European and North American agricultural techniques that were inappropriate for totally different climes. It is therefore natural to speculate that the climate in Palestine was markedly wetter and cooler when Leviticus was written: is this another sign of the climate change, largely due to the deforestation of the area, that we know has taken place?

The understanding that the earth was the Lord's and not mankind's was underlined by the rules governing the jubilee year: in the fiftieth year land and property were to be restored to their original owners, ensuring a fair distribution of land and thereby bringing together the principles of a respect for creation and justice to the poor. Neighbourliness towards the disadvantaged was paralleled in an acknowledgement of our indebtedness to the land in its provision of crops and livestock for food and clothing, and of wood for fuel and the building of shelter. That was to be part of the working out of man's stewardship, of being 'an under-

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god', of expressing care. It is a true insight of Isaiah that a wanton exploitation of the land leads to a total breakdown of the balance of nature and the destruction of the soil: pollution compounds its degradation and desertification results. It is seen as an inevitable consequence, the wrath of God punishing his people.

Beware, the Lord is about to strip the earth,  
split it and turn it upside down,  
and scatter its inhabitants!  
The earth is empty and void and stripped bare.  
For this is the word that the Lord has spoken.  
The earth dries up and withers,  
The whole world wilts and withers,  
the heights of the earth wilt.  
The earth itself is desecrated by those who live on it.  
That is why a curse consumes the earth  
and its inhabitants suffer punishment,  
why the inhabitants of the earth dwindle and only a few are left.  
(Isaiah 24, parts of vv.1-6 REB)

Inbuilt into passages like this is a deep understanding of the link between man's care for the earth and the earth's ability to provide for his needs: the sinfulness of man leads to the destruction of nature, the agony of creation reflecting man's inner turmoil. The elements of justice and peace are closely interwoven with the integrity of creation.

### STEWARDSHIP

A gentler care and respect for all the resources that God has placed in our hands - not just the ores and minerals of the earth, its wealth of fuels and the nutrients of the soil but also the whole diversity of living creatures from animals and insects to plants - is commonly understood as stewardship. It is a theme developed within the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 25.14-30 where significantly what was entrusted was property which could have been the land; cf. Luke 19.12-27) and needs to be understood in its broadest sense: it has to be more than the simple removal of an attitude of domination.

There is a long-standing tradition within the Eastern Orthodox churches of a holistic view of nature, and it is not an accident that the concept of the integrity of creation was generated within the councils of the World Council of Churches by leaders such as Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios, who has called upon both scientists and theologians to revise their traditional ways of thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Replacing the concept of domination with the concept of stewardship will not lead us very far, for even in the latter there lies the hidden possibility of the objectification and alienation which are the root causes of the sickness of our civilisation..... We would still be reducing nature to 'nothing but.....', that is, nothing but an object given into our hands for safe keeping and good management.<sup>18</sup>

It is important that man sees himself as part of nature, and not as separate from it: only then will we grasp the true nature of the Biblical concept of dominion. Tim Cooper argues that 'acknowledging that we are *part* of nature is absolutely essential

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to solving the environmental crises'.<sup>19</sup>

### SIN AND REDEMPTION

Clearly the welfare of the earth is in man's hands: it is also clear that without the earth yielding its full harvest the welfare of mankind is at hazard. We acknowledge the interdependence of mankind with the rest of creation.

The reverse of this axiom is also true: when man's greed and exploitation cause suffering to his fellow man, nature is entrapped in the process. To take one obvious example, injustice expressed in the burden of debt carried by Third World countries leads to a desperate exploitation of the land to grow crops by which to feed a growing population and at the same time to generate trade with which to pay off the interest due and, hopefully but ever more unrealistically, some of the capital owed. The land becomes degraded until it is finally destroyed: the process of desertification is triggered, and the cash-cropper moves on to destroy more virgin forest.

Nor is the destruction of creation something that is happening just on the other side of the planet. Everyone of us is involved. By our very existence we are putting pressure on creation. Our lifestyles are not sustainable: our consumption of material goods drains the depleted stocks of many non-renewable resources, our use of energy results in a pollution of the atmosphere and an enhancement of the greenhouse effect that is bringing about a climate change on a scale not experienced before, and our needs for clothing, drugs and a wide range of plastics depends on the chemical feedstock of oil which will soon be exhausted. The ecological ruin of God's creation is something for which we, the human race, are held accountable.<sup>20</sup> We are destroying the heritage that God intends to be ours.

This is the sin of mankind. It is not just an individual sin but a corporate sin. Often in the past within our tradition it has been held that each and every one of us is responsible for our sin: that is an individualistic and privatised understanding of religion. If salvation is personal, private and individual, sin must correspondingly be private and personal. But we are caught up in the warp and weft of human life: we cannot detach ourselves from it.

Our responsibility is also part of our unity with God's creation. We live *in* the world, not *on* it.

We should be identifying with the sin of our world, the sin against the world, and seeking God's forgiveness. The sin of the world is so much part of the structure of our reality and way of life that we cannot extricate ourselves from it completely. As individuals at least, we cannot turn the tide but what we can do in response to this reality of sin is accept our corporate responsibility in confession.<sup>20</sup>

And if we really believe in incarnation, if we really believe that God continues to work within and around us (Ps. 119.73, 139.13-15; Isa. 44.24; John 5.17) we realise that that creative work is also his redemptive work. Herein lies our salvation. It may be that we need to expand our concept of God.

Since God is present 'in, with and under' all the changing events of the world, the world's sufferings, as well as its creative possibilities, find their reflection in our understanding of God's being. God suffers in and with created beings, both as they persist and in the process of bringing forth the new. The Incarnation and the Cross point beyond themselves and the redemption of humanity to the mystery of suffering within the

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whole created order.<sup>11</sup>

Because of that interdependence, the redemption that creation seeks is bound up with the redemption of mankind. Not until man's greed and inherent repression of nature is banished will nature be restored.

The creation waits in eager expectation.... in hope [that it] will be liberated from its bondage to decay: the whole creation has been groaning..... right up to the present time. (Rom. 8.19-22 NIV)

Our responsibility as priests before our God and Father is to plead for forgiveness, not just for ourselves but for the whole of the human race, that the salvation for the whole of God's created order might be brought closer. It is an imperative that gains strength as we view the ecological crisis that is about us and we realise that time is not on our side.

As Wesley Granberg-Michaelson took up office as Director of the Church and Society Sub-unit of the WCC he wrote:

I am deeply impressed by the opportunity for strengthening the response of the world church to the global and ecological crisis. Despite many encouraging signs, the work in this area has barely begun. Within the ecumenical movement, commitments to justice and peace have been deeply embraced as crucial to the message of the gospel of Christ. Yet the 'integrity of creation' strikes many as a new and puzzling concept yielding as many questions as commitments.<sup>21</sup>

It is an urgent task before us all.

### NOTES

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4. Trevenen James, in *Third Way*, April 1990, p.9.
5. E.g. Ian Bradley, *God is Green*, 1990; Tim Cooper, *Green Christianity*, 1990; Sean MacDonagh, *To Care for the Earth*, 1986, and *The Greening of the Church*, 1990.
6. *op.cit.* p.95.
7. Quoted in *Faith, Science and the Future*, Preparatory Readings to the 1979 WCC Conference, p.134.
8. Loren Wilkinson (ed.), *Earthkeeping*, 1980, p.209, quoted by Cooper, p.51.
9. Cited by H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*, 1985, p.91, quoted by Cooper, p.47.
10. See C. E. Raven, *John Ray, Naturalist*, Cambridge 1986, pp.454-457: the quotation of Wisdom, pp.127-131, is given as a footnote on p.455.
11. *WCC Church and Society Newsletter*, No.8, December 1987.
12. W. Granberg-Michaelson (ed.), *Tending the Garden*, 1987, p.54, cited by Cooper, p.53.
13. This theme is more extensively developed by Bradley, chapters 1 and 5.
14. Lester R. Brown (ed.), *State of the World 1989*, p.4.
15. *This Common Inheritance* (the White Paper on the Environment), HMSO, 1990, p.51.
16. *The Guardian*, 6 November 1990.
17. See for example Paulos Gregorios in *Faith and Science in and Unjust World*, Report on the WCC Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, 1980, Part 1, p.46ff.
18. Paulos Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 1978, p.84, cited in Cooper, p.56.
19. Cooper, p.57.
20. Sally Ashford, 'Wilderness of Sin' in *Third Way*, October 1988, p.21.
21. *WCC Church and Society Newsletter*, No.12, January 1989.

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