

# **TILLING THE GARDEN AGAIN**

*(Genesis 1-3 rediscovered)*

**Ewan Aitken**

Matriculation No. 8702011

**Honours Dissertation  
Systematic Theology and Old Testament  
New College  
University of Edinburgh  
1990**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to record my very grateful thanks to my supervisors, Professor J.C.L. Gibson, Dr. N. Wyatt, and Dr R. Page. Each not only helped greatly in this dissertation finally appearing in one piece, but ensured that it did not, as it so often threatened, become so broad as to be unmanageable.

My thanks must also go to Val Holtom who very foolishly offered to proof-read the drafts. She needed all her skills in the English language to cope with my 'style' and her commitment in the face of great odds is much appreciated.

Finally my thanks go to my long-suffering parents, particularly to my father's word processor, for their help and support, not only in this piece of work, but for the last ten years as I have slowly progressed towards my final objective of ordination.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 1 - "Into the Text"	5
INTRODUCING THE EXEGESIS	6
GENESIS CHAPTER 1 vv 1-2	18
GENESIS CHAPTER 1 vv 26-28	26
GENESIS CHAPTER 2 v 15	36
GENESIS CHAPTER 2 v 17	41
GENESIS CHAPTER 3 vv 22-24	48
CONCLUSION AND A WAY FORWARD	57
SECTION 2 - "Out from the Text"	59
CREATION, CHRIST AND THE WISDOM MOTIF	60
THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST MAKES	72
THE EUCHARIST AS A COSMIC EVENT	84
TILLING THE GARDEN AGAIN	97
CONCLUSION	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115

## INTRODUCTION

Chief Seattle, a native American Indian Chief, in reply to a demand that he sell his people's land said this: "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which runs through the trees carries the memory of the red man. The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of this earth and it is part of us."(1)

In an article in the Observer newspaper in 1989, the novelist and intellectual Gore Vidal said this: "I suggest that those who create opinion must address themselves-and us who are their victim-to a new way of looking at life. To a new religious sense that differs drastically from the truly terrible religions that we have suffered for the last two millennia. Monotheism is easily the greatest disaster to befall the human race. By nature the sky-god is totalitarian. You will have no other god but he. You will kill those who refuse to worship him, and you are free to destroy the earth because he has instructed us to: "Be

fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." In today's context, that instruction is madness, and its single god - Judaic, Christian, Islamic - is one of immaculate evil."(2)

In responding to the controversial article by Professor Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis'(3), where he offers the life of St Francis as an alternative to the 'triumphalist' way of Genesis, Professor J.C.L Gibson argues that "St Francis ought not to be set against Genesis 1.....They are in their own way saying the same thing. Long before the medieval saint lived his exemplary life the first chapter of God's word laid down the ideal blueprint for a fairer and juster and happier world. Let what it has to say get a hearing and the ecological crisis-and many of humanity's other crises as well-will disappear".(4)

These three viewpoints inspired the questions that are the starting point of the study. Can we see God in all things, or is that only the view of other religions? Has in fact our God been the destroyer of all things rather than the preserver? Can our Bible offer any hope for the future life of this planet, or has it done too much damage already? These questions are set in the context of the upsurge in 'green' politics. In the recent Australian Elections, it was said that politicians no longer kissed

babies, now they planted trees. I don't wish to produce a 'green theology', more a new understanding of nature, perhaps even the cosmos, from which a green theology and even a green political platform might grow. In essence however, it is fundamentally an attempt to get back to basics and reassess just how we see the world about us, the world that keeps us alive as we in turn slowly destroy it.

My introductory quotations came from the speech of an American Indian, the writings of a classical atheist and the lectures of a New College Professor. Given that multi-disciplinary start, this was always going to be a very broad view of a very broad subject. In its construction therefore, I have attempted to take account of the dangers inherent in that broadness of subject matter by focusing in on particular areas, and as a result, not dealing with others that one might expect from a study such as this. These choices have a rationale, as shall become clear, but I want from the outset to recognise the unashamedly subjective nature of these choices and argue that that subjectivity is both unavoidable and does not, in itself, invalidate my arguments.

There are two sections to this study. Firstly, a detailed exegesis of 10 selected verses from the creation stories of Genesis 1-3. I shall use them to re-assess the creation event and the relationship between creator and created. I shall argue that that is not simply the result of creation,

but the order and form that is creation. I will argue that we need to seriously re-assess the very understanding upon which we have based so much of our decision-making when it has come to dealing with the created order. I look at dominion, God's commandments in the garden, and the true nature of the banishment; was it a fall set in notions of evil, or was it simply a failure simply to live up to the potential of the relationships that made up the garden?

The second section moves on with this exegetical model, taking its re-assessments and setting them in the light of Jesus. How is Jesus' proffered salvation linked to his role in creation? What difference does his life make? I look in detail at the Eucharist, arguing that it is a cosmic event that restates the relationships of creation, setting out again the unfulfilled potential harmony of the cosmos. This I, then, develop into a new world-view that sets out the idea of ultimate harmony and shows how that harmony is as much part of our lives now as it is the framework for the final eschaton. This has political ramifications for the Christian community, which I outline in my conclusion.

#### **NOTES**

- 1) Chief Seattle in **YOUR WILL BE DONE**, CCA Youth, Singapore, 1986, p89
- 2) Gore Vidal, **GODS AND GREENS**, in Observer Review, October 22nd, 1989
- 3) Professor L. Whyte, **THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF OUR ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**, in "Science", Vol 155, 10th March, 1967, pp1204-1207
- 4) J.C.L.Gibson, "Daily Study Bible" - **GENESIS**, St Andrews Press, Edinburgh, 1981, p81



## INTRODUCING THE EXEGESIS

Any exegesis such as the one that we are about to attempt requires first some general reflections on the issues raised over the years by studies of the passages. These include authorship, language forms and style, specific subject debates, (in this case The Garden Motif) and the 'sitz in leben', both of the text as it was formed, and its position and usage in the wider text of the Old Testament. In the end, it is the text that is our place of work, but these parameters require some comment.

Setting: Genesis 1-3 is part of the section Genesis 1-11 which most commentators see now as a unit in itself, gathered and added perhaps right at the end of the gathering of the Hexateuch.(1) Previously, Genesis 1-3 was seen as a separate unit in itself and from that came the theology of 'creation and fall' with all its inherent difficulties. Von Rad and many others however, have argued for the wider view of 1-11 being the unit.(2) This moves the theological emphasis from the fall at the end of Genesis 3 to the more cyclic flow through the book of Genesis, and some would argue the whole of the Pentateuch or even the Hexateuch. This cycle is one of covenant, that covenant being broken and then redemption and salvation. As will become clear in the exegesis, the theme is not one of sin but of salvation. So much of the writing relates

clearly to the exilic and post-exilic times and reflects that in its priorities. The Israelites were a people of their history. This preparatory primeval setting that is Gen 1-11 pulls together their Creator, their Patriarchs and their existence now. It is a discussion not of how and why, but of who? It involves crime, punishment and salvation. As Westermann puts it: "There is an inner connection between the uniqueness of the creator, the limitations of creation to humanity and the world, and the meaning that this gives to human beings and their history".(3) It is that inner connection, that inherent necessary relationship that holds the key for our work.

Authorship: Few, if any, commentators would drift too far from the generally accepted view that the first section of the Old Testament, stretching from Genesis to Joshua and known as the Hexateuch, are in their final gathered form, the work of a redactor. In amongst this redactor's work lies a number of more or less recognisable source documents, or at least the hand of distinguishable authors. Two of them are known by their distinctive name for God; the Yahweist, (J), with whom we shall be concerned, and the Elohist, (E), whose work does not appear until Genesis 12 and thereafter. The other main writer is the Priestly style, (P), with whom we shall be dealing later. There is also the literarily distinct Deuteronomist (D), but that work is not central to our study.

Language forms and style: Westermann and others note that P is essentially numerative and J is narrative. P's work is much of a theological work, containing a number of what are clearly doctrinal points. It is tight, reflective, almost clinical in form, with little waste of word or phrase. J's work is a flowing story, (or, as we shall see, a reworking of two stories). He clearly has something to say that is theologically motivated, but not in the definitive style of P. Rather he is concerned with Gods with great acts and yet ultimate love for creation and even humanity.

Science and Theology: What we have, particularly in Genesis 1, is a very scientific view of the world. It reflects quite clearly the ancient understanding of the nature of the cosmos. A flat earth, a surrounding firmament, pillars, underground oceans, waters above and below. The fact that we know that this is not the case does not make it invalid. Just as the recognition of mythical language does not invalidate the theological statement, so the discovery that we can fly a plane without hitting the firmament does not in itself deny the idea expressed so clearly in Genesis 1 that God created the Cosmos and all that is in it.

Two stories: At first reading there seems to be something of a contradiction between the two stories about creation that are found in Genesis 1-3. What is sometimes more disconcerting is that there are clear parallels with

creation stories to be found all over the Ancient Near East.(4) The effect of parallel neighbouring stories shall be dealt with later. What is important to note at this point is that many of these parallel stories have more than one account of creation and like Genesis, these accounts are in fact dealing with different issues of creation. Thus, we have the creation of the whole and the creation of the one.(5) The Israelites needed both stories because they explained different aspects of their existence. Although the stories appear to be about beginnings, they are in fact about origins rather than simply the beginning of time. They relate to different aspects of life and of self-understanding in the cosmic setting.

Myth and Theology: The word 'myth' is very often used to explain the literary genre of a people's history. It is also quite freely applied to the stories of beginnings of many civilisations: Greeks, Romans, Egyptians etc. The concept 'myth' holds within it several meanings, all of which revolve round the example of 'a story with another meaning'. This meaning can be moral, historical, religious or theological.(6) It is sometimes a part of, or the core of Folklore, but is also often closely associated with the explanation of religious ritual.

Many anthropologists argue that myth plays a very important role in the very self-understanding of societies and civilisations. Myths can be used to articulate the deities

or explain the cosmos. They can be the bridge between reality and the supernatural, nature and the human, emotion and self-expression.

Carl Jung argues that myths symbolise not cosmic phenomena but subconscious urges which, if not expressed, can destroy us. These, he maintains, are common to all ages, which accounts for the great similarity of fairy tales and myths throughout the world.(7) Whilst I would perhaps question the rather westernised understanding of the make-up of the human mind in such an assertion, the assumption of the universality of myth is perhaps one of the few common ties within human social organisations.

Myths are used to give authority to the social order, they express moral values, they interpret belief and activity of deities. They give explanations to questions of the cosmos and the uncontrolled events of life. They are also used to control important life events. Levi-Strauss sees myth as the bridge between nature and culture, the move from participant in nature to controller over and understanding of nature. Levi Strauss articulates the universality of Myth when he argues that "Men communicate by symbols: but they can only have these instincts and communicate by them because they have the same instincts."(8)

Perhaps the most enlightening example of the power and role of myth on a society's self-understanding and social order

that Social Anthropology has thrown up over recent years is that of the Melanesian Cargo Cults.(9) This South Pacific phenomenon has grown up in the last 40 or 50 years. Its recent development makes it the more poignant as we can get a real picture of the social/cultural/political ramifications. A fascinating mixture of Christianity and Pagan Cosmology, they involve rites, rituals, sacred places and a deep real belief that the ancestors will provide for them. It has affected moral reformation, social order, political aspiration, nationalism, material desires, even the very personality of the Melanesian. Fired undoubtedly by severe social unrest it provided a focus for present problems, an explanation of how present circumstances had occurred, and true hope for the future, an eschatology in its own right. The society changed itself, reassessed what it had taken for many years to be accepted norms, and took on board a new self-understanding of history, the future and today. Each element of the cults are captured and articulated in what is undoubtedly mythical terminology. But as descriptions of the events, they not only hold within the mythological language a kernel of factual events, but a theological explanation for that event, thus the move is from event to a faith in that which is behind the event.

It is my belief that it is precisely this phenomenon we experience in much of the Old and the New Testaments; the reflective reappraisal and self-understanding of a people

and their relationship with their deity. Therefore we have not simply a reworking of history in mythical terms, but something far more fundamental. The debate is not, in Old Testament terms, between Myth and History, but between Polytheistic Myth and Monotheistic Myth. It is about the mindset of a people and their understanding of their deity. It is not an objective description but a living, growing, much reworked expression of something real, a belief that the power behind the explanations not only existed but really did participate in the lives of those for whom the myths were written.

To argue that much of the language of the Bible is the language of myth does not undermine the concept of it being inspired. To do so is simply to set the language of the Bible in the context of human reality and social self-expression. We are so keen to objectify, explain and box the faith of others but essentially we try to somehow separate our own faith expression from the very nature of the human beings whence it came. Many of the events reported in the bible, particularly the Old Testament, may be God inspired but are not verbatim reports or eye-witness accounts. For the Bible to be real it was born and grew in the manner of all of human explanations of the supernatural, reflecting the very things that allow us to express ourselves at all, our human interaction and awareness of existence. God used humans as they were to nurture the Bible into existence and its form and

manifestation reflects that in every way.

So, for example, when we find similar instances in contemporary, extra-biblical sources, (Ugaritic texts, Ba'al, El Elohim etc), of deities battling it out, in the stories of good and evil, order and chaos, etc, and we say an echo or similar motif is to be found in Genesis 1, we are not denying the validity of the Biblical story or saying that it did not come from God. We are simply recognising the contextual influences on those who put pen to paper in their attempt to tell of their God, (Yahweh), and how s/he related to them. It is the use of word pictures to evoke the inexplicable....a tool Jesus himself used so often.

This use of mythological Language is not to be confined to our exegetical understanding. In this attempt to find a living meaning for today that grows from a new understanding of the Hebrew creation myths of Genesis, I will continue to use the language of myth. I shall refer to we ourselves today being Gods Gardeners, to the return to the Garden, to tilling the Garden again. In doing so I will be trying to restate the relationship with God that the writers of the stories of Genesis 1-3 believed they had, and from there, discover how having such a relationship today might affect our view not just of creation, but of the one who created.

The Garden Motif: The most striking use of mythological language in the chapters that we are about to look at could be argued to be the Garden Motif of Chapters 2+3. Remember that we have already made the point that the descriptions found in Chapter 1 may sound mythological but were in fact scientific for that day. As shall become clear, the garden motif is more than just an analogy for the Temple or for paradise, although they are clearly both part of the overall make-up of the motif. What I shall argue is that what is central to the thinking behind the use of the particular motif is the relationships involved in the picture it creates. These relationships are multi-faceted and in more than one form. They see God as transcendent creator, but only creator because there is something, (the garden), created. There is humanity in a special relationship with God, but also, as a gardener, in a special relationship with the garden. Every garden has its own ecosystem, its own ecological cycle that is its flowing, moving life with seasons and changing days. There is an order that is life shared which a garden encapsulates so well. It is this that I shall continue to use to describe the future possibilities as well as discovering past understanding.

A.R.Millard, in "The Meaning of Eden", VT 34, 1984, p103-105, covers the main etymological debate about Eden. Is it Akkadain from the Sumerian for 'steppe' or 'plain'? Or is it from the Semitic 'dn', meaning lush or abundant?

He shows that although not clear cut, the Semitic argument is the stronger. The wider usage has a ring of paradise, place of abundance, of life. Certainly in terms of the theological conclusions that we shall see later on, this usage would be more appropriate.

I will argue that Eden is not a place. The four rivers and the mountain may be an allusion to Jerusalem, which in turn may be an allusion to the Temple, or the place of the Temple. It clearly has some royal implications connected to the role of humans in the garden, both as royalty and from that, as priests. Its central theme is that of relationships, relationships that are bigger than a place, and are not to be confined to a particular point of creation; about not only the origin of creation but its whole order. That is my point of departure as we approach the detailed exegesis.

Selective exegesis: The question may be asked, why these particular groups of verses, is there not some agenda in the selection process that will in some way affect the final outcome? The answer is yes, but as I have already made clear, some subjectivity in any theological exercise, be it exegetical, systematical or otherwise, is unavoidable. What is required therefore, is recognition of the factors that influence the subjectivity, rather than claiming unfounded objectivity. In this case I am, as I outlined in my introduction, looking for a new approach to

the cosmos; one which takes account of the relationships that are inherent in its creation and formation. So firstly I look to the original statements of creation, Genesis 1 v1-2. The role of humanity is central to my concern, though not by implication to workings of the cosmos, so I look to humanity's creation and role, Genesis 1 vv26-28.

These things cannot be read in isolation however, and there is another biblical creation story. This one deals more specifically with humanity's task in the cosmos, outlined first in Genesis 2 v15. That task has parameters that relate to the relationship between creator and created, Genesis 2, v17. The state of play now is not as it was first set out and so some assessment as to a) why that is and b) what can be done to restore it is required. I look therefore to the point at which the alienation is discussed in detail in the second creation story, Genesis 3 vv22-24. Each of these will take account of the wider textual locality but they provide the initial focus for our study, given their particular approach to the subject before us.

#### NOTES

- 1) See eg; G. von Rad, **GENESIS, OLD TESTAMENT LIBRARY**, SCM Press, London, 1987.
- 2) See eg; *ibid*, p21ff, and Claus Westermann, **GENESIS, 1-11**, SPCK, London, 1982, p2ff
- 3) Westermann, *op cit*, p67.
- 4) For a detailed study see S.G.F. Brandon, **CREATION LEGENDS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1963.
- 5) Westermann, *op cit*, p24.
- 6) See eg; C. Levi Strauss, **STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**, Penguin Books, London, 1968; P. Munz, **WHEN THE GOLDEN BOUGH BREAKS**, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, London, 1973.
- 7) Carl Jung, **PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION**, Yale UP, New Haven, 1938.

- 8) Levi Strauss, op cit, p38.  
9) see eg; Peter Worsley, **THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, A STUDY OF CARGO CULTS IN MELANESIA**, McGibbon and Kee, London, 1968. E.P. Elkin, **SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN MELANESIA**, OUP, London, 1953.

A  
A

## GENESIS CHAPTER 1 vv 1-2

As already noted, we have here in Genesis 1 the work of the editor/redactor 'P'. In fact it is here that we have some of his most characteristic work; tight doctrine, precisely, deliberately crafted theology.(1) These first two verses are a microcosm of his work; verse one; his own clear doctrinal formulation, though drawn from the wider influences of the Ancient Near East,(2) and verse two, reflecting years of reflection and reassessment both by the Hebrews and Babylonian, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic neighbours.(3) As we shall see, we hear in these two verses clear monotheism and the echoes of myths of creation, deities and struggles that go far beyond the boundaries of the theology of the chosen ones.

It would be true to say that these two verses have suffered some of the closest scrutiny of all the biblical texts. Although we are primarily interested in the creation element, some brief words on the issues involved will both throw light on their popularity, and on the central themes of our study.

The first debate is of course whether or not v1 is a main clause, and thus a sentence in its own right, or whether it is in fact a subclause, preparing for v3. Speiser argues quite persuasively that v1 is a dependent temporal clause, preparing the way for the action of verse 3. He points to

the syntax, grammar context, and parallels (both extra-biblical, eg Enuma elis, and Gen 2, vv4b-7) and argues a uniform direction. He then goes on to argue that this is underpinned theologically, ie that to do other than he does would be to suggest that the first act of creation was to produce the chaos of verse 2 and that would be unpalatable.(4)

It is interesting that the commentators who eventually disagree with Speiser and his supporters suggest that it is precisely on theological grounds that their case is won. It is von Rad that says that whilst both translations are possible in terms of language syntax etc. theologically the view that in fact v1 is a main clause is the only one that can hold water.(5) Westermann's view that "'P's point is not that heaven and earth had a beginning but that the creation of heaven and earth was the beginning of history"(6) underpins the idea that this is a deliberate statement of 'P', that is in itself theological. It is a doctrine of creation that has a part to play in the prologue of Genesis 1-11 and in the historical self understanding of the Israelites that is so very much the theme of the Hexateuch.

I myself would go along with the view that verse 1 is a main clause. It ought to be seen as the chapter heading, stating from the start the basic understanding of the ultimate power of Yahweh. I would argue that this view

reflects more clearly 'P's theological statements of monotheism, coupled with the sense of praise and worship that is echoed in the Psalms (eg Pss 8, 96, 104) which both predate and clearly influence this work. Implicit in this stance is the fact that there is no concept of creatio ex nihilo in 'P's work. Chaos is not explained, it is simply seen, as we shall see in detail later, as being that from which God created. What this says about the place of evil in creation will be dealt with at a later point. What is clear is that, whilst, as we shall see, 'P' is happy to draw on the themes of other creation stories, he needs to be sure that it is clear that Yahweh is unique and as Westermann puts it, "there is reality because God acts." (7) In that, as Gibson suggests, there is a statement about the relationship between God and creation. It is that relationship with which we are concerned. (8)

**God created:** God, the given, created, acted. The Hebrew for created is bara. It is used solely in the Old Testament about acts of God. But they relate also to present and future activity as well as past work, (9) eg Exodus 34, v10; Psalm 51, v10; Isaiah 40, vv25-26. There is a transcendent element here but also an active one, the active God in history. The word means much more the act of separation or divide rather than form or make (Gen 2 v4b ). Its clearly a divine act.

Some commentators argue that the use of heaven and earth is

the limiting of our knowledge.(10) I am not sure that that is the case. Whilst the implied transcendence of God is clearly behind the limitations, it relates much more to the act of God than to what God has done for us. It is more representative of the limits of the statements later in the passage. As von Rad puts it, it is the summary statement of everything that is unfolded step by step in the following verses. We are still at God and not at ourselves.(11)

Verse two takes us in motif and symbol into a world beyond the Hebrew. **Tohowabohu**, translated '**form and void**', or '**formless**', has a power beyond the rather bland meanings of today. I would agree with Skinner's comparison of the usage in Jer 4, vv23-26, where the phrase is used to convey the idea of a darkened and desolate earth from where life has fled.(12) It is in my view, a preparation for the darkness of the next clause. Gibson argues that we see here the clearest resonance of Babylonian mythology,(13) though that would not preclude other parallels from surrounding cultures that we don't know about. There is a real dread of the chaos in the Hebrew, (Pss 74, 93, Isa 51), but also a real faith that God controls all. We don't quite have the battle of opposing forces in explicit terms, but the echo is clear enough. What we may see here however, is the theological statement that chaos is never far away and we could slip back so easily without the power of God.(14) In some senses that is the evil inherent in the world, the place distant from God. It is not a spatial concept, but

the other side of the mythical struggle. It is this evil, this lack of order that Yahweh has overcome, that is the implied struggle, rather than the battle between two gods (eg Enuma Elish).

There are an enormous number of examples of the world coming out of darkness,(15) not only from the Ancient Near East but in creation stories from societies throughout the world. For the Hebrew the implied struggle would not jar, though Westermann in particular would want to argue that there is no actual idea of a struggle here.(16) The reference to the deep, tehom, would continue this theme well. Von Rad sees a linguistic affinity with the Babylonian dragon of chaos here and certainly there are a number of cosmological keywords being used.(17) Spieser would want to make it clear that these allusions are literary tool that imply no validity to the source.(18) They simply allow the reader to use the concepts of his time whilst maintaining the unique monotheism of Yahweh. Whilst I would agree generally with that sentiment, I would want to emphasise here that we see again 'P' drawing on and standing in the line of the heritage and tradition of the Israelites. They are a people of their history and 'P' is no exception. That being said however, it is important again to make the point that the use of myth is to say something about the human state, not to articulate history as such. Even the history of Israel is in essence saying something not about time, but about the human condition.

That condition is reflected in the image of 'the deep' (waters) being the place of darkness. The word for waters appears thirty five times in the Old Testament. It always means a flood or the deep. Some commentators see a connection with Tiamat, a goddess of the Babylonian creation story.(19) Westermann argues that its wide usage in other contexts denies its personification and that grammatically the case is not proven.(20) I wonder, however, if the hearer might have heard what the reader does not read, and so glimpse again the struggle implied by 'P' in the idea of the deep.

**Ruach/Rach**, spirit of God, is a subject of debate. Do we see here a storm, (Von Rad), the flight of an eagle (Deut 32 v11), a hovering mother bird (Moffat), an implied world egg motif, (Skinner), a wind of God, (Westermann)? Kinder argues that the Old Testament used spirit as a term of Gods outgoing energy, creative and sustaining.(21) Do we see therefore the arrival of the moving/hovering spirit as the first act of creation? Or is it much more preparatory as the grammar debate has shown, almost saying this spirit was that which what was before creation began.

**The Ruach:** was it moving or hovering, brooding or swooping? Do we see a tone of a style of divine work being set here, moving from formless to formed?(22) This would appear to be backed up by Westermann's idea that with the Ugaritic root verb can only be to reflect the movement of a

wind(23), (see also von Rad, Speiser et al). A wind to express a creating God has a number of extra biblical parallels. Davidson argues that we see here a theological statement being made; "wind, a symbol of power, is used theologically to refer to the dynamic activity and presence of God in the world-his spirit".(24) Thus, while in terms of the literary history of the word wind would be more appropriate, spirit captures the theological statement implied by the use of the idea of the wind of God. Given the context of this introduction to a concise creation story that holds within it a theme of the power of God active yet transcendent Spirit would seem to touch on that style more effectively, and moving expresses the progressive, active theme that is the act of creation.

So do we have a creating God moving over disorder, in essence winning the battle and thus bringing order into being? Was there nothing before God acted and creation included a time of chaos? Most modern commentators agree that to create chaos and then order is paradoxical if not nonsensical. As I have already shown, the debate about creatio ex nihilo is not one that 'P' would have entered into. His statement was that God created everything that is, that is the power of God. God is the life of all. The role of Chaos in the story is simply that from which Yahweh created, not a doctrine about matter or detail about the event of creation. To draw that from the story would be to stray from the author's intent and to read too much of our

own agenda into the much sought for meaning. The verses hold in them an expression of belief; that all that is, is the order that God created from chaos. That chaos is still a state of (non)existence that we might enter should we stray from God. Our relationship with God is, as we shall see, a crucial element in the order of creation.

#### NOTES

- 1) Von Rad, op cit, p47, Westermann, op cit, p21, J.C.L. Gibson, op cit, p1.
- 2) Westermann, op cit, p80.
- 3) eg, Gibson, op cit, p16, Von Rad op cit, p50, J.Skinner, **GENESIS, INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY**, T+T Clark, Edinburgh, 1910, p14.
- 4) E.A.Speiser, **GENESIS THE ANCHOR BIBLE**, Doubleday and Co.,New York, 1964, p12.
- 5) Von Rad, op cit, p50.
- 6) Westermann, op cit, p98.
- 7) ibid, p100.
- 8) Gibson, op cit, p20.
- 9) ibid, p25.
- 10) Westermann, op cit, p101.
- 11) Von Rad, op cit, p49,
- 12) Skinner, op cit, p17.
- 13) Gibson, op cit, p27.
- 14) Von Rad, op cit, p51.
- 15) see eg H. Gunkel, **THE INFLUENCE OF THE BABYLONIAN MYTHOLOGY ON THE BIBLICAL CREATION STORY** (1895) in B.W. Anderson (Ed) **CREATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, SPCK, London, 1984.
- 16) Westermann, op cit, p106.
- 17) Von Rad, op cit, p50.
- 18) Speiser, op cit, p10.
- 19) see eg Von Rad, Speiser, Skinner.
- 20) D.Kinder, **GENESIS** Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Inter-varsity Press, Leicester, 1967, p45.
- 21) ibid, p45.
- 23) Westermann, p108.
- 24) Davidson, **GENESIS**, CUP, Cambridge, 1973, p16.

## GENESIS CHAPTER 1 vv 26-28

Along with vv1-2, these three verses of Genesis chapter 1 have claimed the attention of hundreds of scholars, and not a few politicians. In fact, if Westermann's massive survey is anything to go by, there has been more discussion about these verses than even the great opening two. I'll look in detail at some of the points that Westermann raises in his survey, (although either to attempt to repeat it or do my own could not do justice to the debate as he does), but first I want to quote Westermann's reflections on verse 26 as an introduction to the sensitivity of the exegesis before us:

"Since biblical interpretation came into contact with Greek thought and the modern understanding of humanity, scarcely any passage in the whole of the Old Testament has retained such interest as the verse which says that God created the person according to his image.....What is striking is that one verse about the person, almost unique in the Old Testament, has become the centre of attention in modern exegesis, whereas it has no such significance in the rest of the Old Testament and, apart from Ps 8, does not occur again. This interest does not derive from the bible itself but certain presuppositions in the spiritual order which we cannot overlook."(1)

As we approach the reflections of the scholars, it is crucial that we a) remember these presuppositions, b) be

aware of our own and c) attempt to see something of those of 'P' and his predecessors. Before we begin the more theological reflection on the meaning of the verses, let us look at the issues of debate.

**Then God said:** This repeated motif of command event introducing each of the eight plates in Genesis 1-2 v4a, is part of the reiteration that the source of creation is Gods will.(2) It is the action of God in the events of history beginning the introduction of the God who will always be active in history. Most commentators agree that the similarities to the apparently creative words of Marduk in Enuma Elish are not to be seen as source for this passage. There the issue is the magic and power of competing gods, not creation as a whole. The linguistic form may be the same but the theology is clearly different.

**Let us make man:** Taking first the "let us" we discover much debate. This is different from the more distant 'let there be' of the previous plates, although the more personal style continues in the 'gift' theme of the following plate (v29). Some commentators suggest that this shows that it is the creation of humanity that it the climax of the story.(3) I would suggest however, that this misses the broader theological theme of the story. I shall return to this later.

Some commentators suggest that the plural is a hang-over

from paganism, (the divine councils of Mesopotamia for eg), and the use of the plural Elohim is used to back up this theory.(4) The heavenly court theory, with its Babylonian parallels, has a number of supporters who cite also Old Testament examples (I Kings 22 v19, Job 1 v6f, 2 v1f, Isa 6 v8 (Whom shall I send etc), as parallels. As Westermann points out however, angels and the like were not part of the theology of 'P', for him the important issue was the uniqueness of Yahweh.(5)

The plural is also seen as an avoidance of any real resemblance to God.(6) This does not fit with 'P's later theology of the relationship of humanity to the Creator which has in it royal ideology. This, as we shall see, had ideas of resemblance in power and action if not in form. Why that is the case will be discussed when we deal with the issues surrounding 'image and likeness', and dominion. Westermann's argument is taken from a grammatical viewpoint, linking with the sense of command, and the plural possessives later in the sentence, concluding that important issue is Gods decision to create rather than complications about grammatical detail. Speiser also argues that what we have here is simply an issue of Hebrew grammar, not a deeper meaning.(7) None of the arguments are complete. There are clearly echoes of the heavenly court although the clearer echo may be simply a recollection caught in the parallel command motifs of decision in Enuma Elish or Assyrian work. (Other examples

are developed in A Heidel; The Babylonian Genesis. Univ of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963)) The is certainly some sort of significant statement being made by 'P', but whether it is theological, or an allusion that holds a significance clear for the time but not for now is beyond our ability to define.

The use of the divine '**make/create**', '**bara**' here and three times in v27 is a powerful linguistic tool which takes the reader to a new level of intensity in the story, a speeding up, a more involved experience, linked quite clearly to the creation of humanity, the nature of that created being and its place in the created order.

**Man: Adam**, the collective pronoun, set here in the total dependence on God for its existence. As 'P' prepares his audience the statement is clear. As Gibson puts it; "in the Old Testament, God and God alone is the measure of all things, and it is quite impossible that any Hebrew could have seen anything in "man" as "man" that would merit the title divine".(8) Humanity exists because it was Gods will.

**in our image, in our likeness:** Most commentators, in struggling with this phrase, agree that the listeners of the day would have understood the allusion. **tsalem**, "image," has a fairly literal meaning, ie sculpture, plastic image, idol duplicate (1 Sam 6 v5, Num 33 v52, 2

Kings 11 v18). These do not imply diminished status, more an exact copy in all features. The only exception to this is its usage in Ps 39 v6. Such a description would have been very unsettling for the listener. One has only to think of the second commandment, Exod 20 v4 or the prophets' words (for example Amos 5 v26), to visualise warning bells in the minds of 'P's hearers.

We are not really helped by a study of the second main word in the phrase, that of **Demut**, "**likeness**", a word that is more abstract in meaning: ie appearance, similarity, analogy (Ezeh 1 v5, v26, v27). Some commentators suggest that likeness plays a qualifying role to image. Clearly however, both words reinforce rather than define each other. Their interchangeability (Gen 5 v3) and the use of one without the other (Gen 1 v27, 9 v6) in 'P's work, does suggest more an attempt at tight meaning. There are a number of extra-biblical examples that might perhaps be echoed here: von Rad notes some oriental examples, and also the Egyptian Pharaoh as the image of God on earth.(9) The Babylonian myth of Arurus creation of Ea-bani may be of similar form, and Westermann notes the Maori example of Tiki.(10) Westermann also notes that Maag, in his work, concludes that "whatever the process involved in the application of the divine image to the creature, the human being has been formed in the likeness of a divinity."(11) Maag cites the creation of Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic, which clearly lives with this concept as central.

To begin to discover the meaning of the phrase, in the image and likeness, we have to look outside it, to its context. As I have already noted, Westermann's survey covers the explanations that over the years have been most popular:(12) 1) that it implies the division between natural and supernatural likeness to God, 2) that it is about spiritual capacities, that we are here seeing what is essentially an external, corporeal statement about the image and likeness of God, 3) that this is an expression of the person as God's counterpart, or as God's representative on earth,(king, viceroy etc), or 4) that it is to do with dominion, the call to life or that it is christological. Each of these arguments have their strengths and weaknesses and both draw on the extra-biblical and upon theological agendas in the search for meaning. Westermann's own argument is that we have here an "independent narrative about the creation of human beings which in its present form has been completely integrated into a narrative about the creation of the world and then the exegetical perspective altered."(13) Thus we are talking about an action, not the nature of human beings. In the action is a relationship, God creates his/her counterpart; we are seeing the sense of the whole of humanity, created in relationship with God. But, "the relationship to God is not something which is added to human existence, humans are created in such a way that their very existence is intended to be their relationship to God."(14) This does not go against my earlier comments that the creation story is

about the nature of human existence; both those earlier comments and these are about nature as life lived in relationship to God.

Although Westermann's argument is the one, in terms of its theological conclusions, that I find most appealing, I have to voice serious reservations about the passage being an independent narrative. It seems to me that, given the great sense of unity that 'P' is searching for, any apparent separation is part of the crafted whole, making a statement about the place of humanity in that whole, rather than it being a separate added narrative. That surely denies the set of relationships that 'P' is trying to articulate.

Bonhoeffer's understanding of creation as an event of freedom in true relationship with God, develops the themes of Westermann.(15) Westermann, however, in his search for the sense of unity, rejects the royal imagery and kingship as argued eg by von Rad, Gibson, Wildberger, Schmit,(16) that I believe would take his own argument further. For, in this relationship there lies a task (see v26b, v28). Westermann himself implies this with his Babylonian reference to the people being created to minister to the gods. He moves onto such a line in his work on v26bff as we shall see, but his criticism of the idea that we are Gods representative on earth as the king is the representative of God, 'in the image of God' is not accurate.(17) Given that all of us are in the relationship with God that he describes, our individual actions could

each clearly be seen as those of Gods representative before the whole of creation. Continually in the Old Testament, an individual is used to represent God before the wider community. The royal ideology in such a scheme of things would have rested well on the ears of the Hebrew listener. If, as Westermann himself argues, the event of the relationship that is the result of the creation of humanity has within it a task, the echoing allusion to the responsibilities implied by the king as God's representative on earth may well have been the thrust of the story.

**And let them have dominion over:** Here the task is stated and the relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation is captured in the event of creation. **Dominion, radah,** is a strong word, more than just rule. In 'as to tread the wine press' in Joel 4 v13 it means just that, in Num 24 v19 and Lev 26 v17 it means to subdue, in 1 Kings 5 v4, Ps 110 v2, Ps 72 v8, Isa 14 v6, Ps 8 v6 it is referring to the dominion of kings. The expression has its origin in the language of the royal court of Babylon and Egypt and both Ps 8 and Gen 1 v26f have these courts as their source. The royal allusion is about status not exploitation. The task is seen as part of the harmony of Gods whole creation and humanity's role in it. In that task we see a clear statement of the status of humanity, given, not by divine right, but by the responsibility of the task in the relationship.

Verse 27 sees the repetition of the nature of the creative act, one of image, followed by some detail: the division into male and female, both of them in the image of God, equal partners in the whole event of the creation of humanity in God's image. Throughout the 39 verses of this creation story, 'P's own critique of other non-monotheistic religions comes through. The implicit equal status for women could well be a criticism of the sexual abuse involved in sacred rites in for example the temple prostitution of the canaanite religion.(18) Everything for 'P' was sacred, including fertility. There are also a number of other biblical references that suggest that this was a regular use, ( Lev 12 vv2-7, Num 5 v3), and also in that it was in use as a legal expression in the Jewish-Aramaic papyri from Asswan.

Von Rad argues that in v28 we see the commission that is the consequence of being in God's image.(19) "**and God blessed them**" not as in gift, but in function. Blessing in a similar form occurs with Isaac, Jacob and Moses and is reflected in the Genealogies of Genesis 5. The power of life, held in procreation, is still from the will of God alone.

**Subdue**, in the Hebrew, **kabash**. The word subjugate has the suitable royal nuances (see Ps 8 vv6-8). It is an active word that reflects again the image and likeness in life and being. As von Rad puts it, "The decisive thing about mans

similarity to God...is his function in the non-human world".(20)

It is that God-given but not divine status set in a special relationship of accountability to Yahweh that is the clear message of this passage. The fulfilment of life as the image of Yahweh lies in submission to Yahweh and carrying out the task of being in dominion as would Yahweh; in justice, peace and righteousness.

#### NOTES

- 1) Westermann, op cit, p148.
- 2) Von Rad, op cit, p57.
- 3) eg; Von Rad, p57; Skinner, p30, Kinder, p52.
- 4) Gibson, op cit, p82; Von Rad, op cit, p58.
- 5) Westermann, op cit, p145.
- 6) ibid, p145.
- 7) Speiser, op cit, p7.
- 8) Gibson, op cit, p73.
- 9) Von Rad, op cit, p58.
- 10) Westermann, op cit, p154.
- 11) ibid, p154.
- 12) ibid, p155ff.
- 13) ibid, p156.
- 14) ibid, p157.
- 15) D.Bonhoeffer, **CREATION AND FALL**, SCM Press, London, 1959, p18.
- 16) Von Rad, op cit, p60; Gibson, op cit, p80. Wilderger, TZ(19650, p255; W.H.Schmid, WMANT 17, 1964, p134ff.
- 17) Westermann, op cit, p154.
- 18) see eg; Gibson, op cit, p87; Von Rad, op cit, p60.
- 19) Von Rad, op cit, p60.
- 20) ibid, p60.

## GENESIS CHAPTER 2 v 15

Few commentaries give much time to this verse. In fact, scholars of yesteryear have suggested that it should be ignored altogether, arguing that it does damage to 3 v17f.(1) Although von Rad argues that most research on chapters 2+3 contradicts the traditional exposition of the church,(2) it would be true to say that commentators' rejection or at least apparent ignoring of the significance of this verse is indicative of the overall hidden agenda exegesis that Genesis has suffered from over the years from commentators and church alike.

At first sight, the verse seems to be a repetition of verse 8b. As Westermann shows however, it plays a crucial role in the continuation of 8b after the insertion of v10-14.(3) As I explained earlier, 'J' has carefully intertwined the paradise and creation stories for his overall objective. Here we see a clear example of 'P's' craft. He restates 8b, humans' creation, and then draws in v9s' words about the garden by declaring humanity's task in the Garden. Before we look at that task in detail, let us look at the opening clause.

Lord God, the distinctive title for the creator used by 'J', the Yahweist. Man, (for at this point in the story it is males only), is placed in the Garden of Eden. As I noted in my introduction, there is great debate over whether this

is a symbolic place or a geographical reality. Certainly the clearest parallel of Ezek 28 has a symbolic role; the garden of God, located on God's holy mountain and in this garden there is a King. Davidson and others note the echoes here of the Mesopotamian myth of the King in a divine garden as gardener of the tree of life.(4) It is not clear however if that is what we see here. Speiser makes much of 'J's use of Mesopotamian theology,(5) but I feel it would both be simplistic and too far fetched to argue that that is what is before us.

The garden motif is a widely used one both within the Old Testament, ie Gen 13 v10, Joel 2 v3, Isa 51 v3, Ezek 28, and in extra-biblical literature. The Hebrew word Eden, means delight. Some commentators argue that we see here a reflection of a pre-exilic royal cult,(6) and certainly the idea of Eden being the holy place, the temple or as Wyatt argues, Jerusalem in symbolic terms has a certain resonance.(7) (See eg Ezek 28, Rev 4 and Ps 110). 2 Enoch 8 has a garden of Paradise at the world's end with roots of the tree of life and the idea that the garden is both of this life, yet also of God, on the edge of life and death, the place of beyond as well as the place of life has some support. It would also however, be true to note that the Hebrew view of the after life was limited, and therefore we need to be clear as to what was being said here, ie that this Paradise was not a heaven but a way of life, on earth, that involved Yahweh to a far greater extent. The symbolic

assumptions in the garden motif, both as temple and as Paradise, reflect on the statement being made about humanity by placing man and woman in the garden.

It is in paradise that humanity's true vocation is to be found. It is both life that is 'blissful enjoyment' but also an active working life in obedience to God. The second clause is thus crucial, for it moves the reader from the placing of humanity in Eden, as in v8, to that of being placed there for a reason, a reason directly related to the Garden.

**'to till it and to keep it'** (RSV). This is just one of many versions of this clause. Others include; 'to work it and to take care of it', (NIV), 'to dress it and to keep' (King James), 'to cultivate it and to guard it' (GNB). These widely varying translations are indicative of the difficulty in exact translation here, a difficulty rooted in the problem of ensuring that the meaning of this very crucial passage is not lost. This is the task of humanity and in that task lies our relationship with our maker. This is clearly 'J's theology coming through. There are work themes in Enuma Elish, Atrahsis and some other Mesopotamian myths, but these revolve round humanity being created to take the drudgery of work from the Gods. Here the work is part of being in paradise. Skinner suggests that the Hebrew ideal is not idle enjoyment but easy and pleasant work "the highest aspiration of the eastern peasant being to keep a garden".(8) Just how widespread

this view was, is hard to ascertain, but clearly the idea of work as a central theme of paradise is seen positively. Wyatt's piece on movement in the priestly work touches on this when he sees work as being part of the continual theme of movement from chaos to cosmos, paradise also being a significant motif in this theme.(9) This links with the idea of Eden being on the edge, closely accessible yet beyond us also, (see eg Gibson).

Most commentators agree that we see here a statement that humanity is to participate in paradise, and that the task carries a responsibility. Gibson argues that we see a God-given duty not only to cultivate but to protect the earth, (tending is the same verb used in Gen 3 v24 to guard), if it is ever to become an Eden. "It is not to be exploited for his own ends".(10) Westermann goes further and argues that just as we see in Gen 1-2 v4a the activity of the creator following the rhythm of work and rest, so too God-given human existence follows a pattern of duty.(11) Human existence cannot have meaning or fulfilment without this obligation. This obligation is the root and source of the Creator/created relationship. Just as the Hebrew '**derrek**' meaning to drink from the way also meant throne, ie to dispense justice from the throne, so the king dispenses justice from the throne, the justice of Yahweh; (see also Pss 9, 19, 91 132 and 1 Chron 28 v5 and 29 v23).

## NOTES

- 1) K. Budde, noted in Westermann, op cit, p220.
- 2) Von Rad, op cit, p74.
- 3) Westermann, op cit, p222.
- 4) Davidson, op cit, p33.
- 5) Speiser, op cit, p19.
- 6) see eg; N Wyatt, **SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER** in ZAW 93 (1987) pp10-20.
- 7) ibid, p12
- 8) Skinner, op cit, p60.
- 9) N.Wyatt, **THERE AND BACK AGAIN: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MOVEMENT IN THE PRIESTLY WORK**, in SJOT 2, (1989), p60-81.
- 10) Gibson, op cit, p112.
- 11) Westermann, op cit, p222.

## GENESIS CHAPTER 2 v 17

Professor Robert Davidson captures the nature of the task before us in this passage when he introduces his own commentary on the piece by saying; "these are key passages for our understanding of the whole narrative but they raise difficult problems of interpretation".(1) With verses 15 and 16 we now have the task, the freedom and then the parameters. This verse sets the framework from where the relationship between God and humanity, articulated in the life in the garden, will have meaning. Verse 16 is a positive statement about life in the garden; freedom to eat of any fruit of any of the trees. Verse 17 is a development of that, having as it does, the central prohibition of garden life.

**The tree of Knowledge:** the first issue is was there one tree or two? Clearly two, but then why are there two? Most commentators see the two trees as one of the clues to the idea that this story is a combination of more than one story/myth. I hesitate to be clear as to the literary nature of the source for, as we shall see later, plumping for one or other will have some significance on the final conclusions that we reach. There are a large number of examples of tree of life motifs in creation stories of that time and earlier, (eg Gilgamesh epic, Some intertestamental sources, Phoenician; see eg Spi~~e~~ser, Westermann, von Rad, Wyatt,(2) Skinner). Biblical links include Proverbs 11 v30,

Revelation 2 v7, 22 vv1-2. Wyatt argues that the Cross of Jesus is the tree in paradise, with the motif of King as gardener being replayed, reflecting the legend of Sargon where being gardener is tantamount to being king, Eden holding the image of both temple and royal palace.(3) I shall deal with the significance of Christ in a later chapter, but the implied power in the picture of the tree of life is clearly not lost to 'J'.

However, we have here, not the tree of life but the tree of knowledge. The tree of life appears only in the introduction, v9, and in the conclusion, 3 vv22-24. Though there are two trees, there is only one theme, focused on the tree of knowledge. Von Rad and Spieser, to name but two, both show that the reference to both trees in v9 is syntactically difficult. Both conclude that the Hebrew reference to the midst of the garden makes the addition of tree of knowledge difficult. Given that, the only place that the tree of knowledge has that title is v9 and here in v17. Otherwise it is known as 'the tree', or, 'the tree in the midst of the garden', which of course, according to v9, is the tree of life! Westermann argues that given that there are many inter and extra biblical references to the motif tree of life, the title tree of knowledge of good and evil is a formulation of 'J', taken from the text itself. (3 v5b). Westermann's assured conclusion that the "narrative which concerned only the tree in the midst of the garden has been expanded at both beginning and end by

the addition of a motif that belonged to an independent narrative"(4) is perhaps further than others might go. It would be true however, to say that clearly here again 'J' is trying to blend the myths and stories of his heritage to say something new without denying the past. It is in the agenda of the blending that we shall find the clues to our meaning.

**Knowledge of good and evil:** most commentators make it clear that knowledge in the Hebrew here (the verb is **yd**) refers not simply to intellectual knowledge but to the broadest range of human experiences, including sexual experiences, (eg Gen 4 v1). This broad ranging concept of knowledge is added to the phrase of good and evil (**tob wara**), which again is more wide ranging than at first it appears in the English. Davidson argues that we see here an example of the Hebrew idiom of expressing totality in opposites paired.(5) Thus here we are not just dealing in morality and ethics, but also emotions and aesthetics (eg and God saw that it was good..). All Old Testament usage of the pairing is as wide ranging as we find here,so that as von Rad puts it "Knowledge of good and evil means... omniscience in the widest sense of the word".(6)

The final phrase **in the day that you eat of it you shall die**, suggests that Davidson is right to be explicit about momentous consequence of this verse-death.(7) The reason for the prohibition is much more important and the choice

given to humanity much more far-reaching than the details of worship; we are dealing here with life, created by God and in the power of God alone. But that Paradise that is creation has parameters for humanity, stated simply and clearly in a in the prohibition that relates to one tree within the great bounty that was all of paradise. The prohibition allowed for a real relationship to exist. As Gibson puts it; " 'man' can either work for God and find happiness and freedom in serving him, or he can go his own way, thinking he knows all that there is to know, and live with the inevitable consequences".(8) Von Rad argues that in this divine address "the misunderstanding of the garden as an Elysium for sensual enjoyment is completely destroyed".(9) The crux of the matter is not the provision for humanity, but the relationship between creator and created.

The command is in the style of the Decalogue, ie without a mediator. Skinner notes, I think rightly, that we must not anticipate the serpent here. For as he and others point out, the serpent tells us something new (that such knowledge would put us on a par with God). The command is about the moment then, not about the ensuing events, it was not God setting humanity up to knock it down. It was about freedom in the creation event. Perhaps here we see the clearest link between Adam and Israel. It is not an instruction as was the command to till (v15), it is a command that states a direct, life orientated relationship.

It is, as Westermann suggests, a command not of historical time but of primeval time.

How then, before we conclude, do we reconcile the power of the great command with the apparently contradictory events of 3 v19? Kinder suggests that the clue lies in Hebrews 11 v5 a preparation of death.(10) Von Rad suggests that we may have lost the germ of immortality, or that we see the grace of God, although these are not enough and he suggests that we cannot fully reconcile the two verses and so must assume that the threat remains.(11) Skinner argues that "the simple explanation is that God, having regard to the circumstances of the temptation changed his purpose and modified the penalty".(12) Gibson, after articulating the underlying, almost outrageous suggestion (to 20th century ears!) that God told a lie, finds a parallel with Adapa of Mesopotamia.(13) Thus we have a linguistic tool used to "underline Gods total abhorrence of 'man's' proneness to disobey". Spieser argues that 'the moment' is equivalent to 'on the day' (see 2 v4b), thus the thrust is an absolute but not instantaneous, thus we are doomed to death.(14) Westermann puts two extremes opposite each other.(15) Firstly the argument that the phrase is not to be taken literally. The meaning elsewhere is taken to be general (Gen 5 v11, Exod. 6 v28, 10 v28), thus the penalty is clear but the force is not of the immediate moment. Secondly, that we have the idea that we have had mortality imposed upon us. Westermann suggests that in fact we have here not

a threat but a warning, not so much about death but that God acts differently from the way he indicated. Westermann argues that "This 'inconsequence is essential to the narrative; it shows that God's dealings with his creatures cannot be pinned down, not even by what God said previously."(16)

This brief resume of some of the possible options give a picture of just how difficult the task is that lies before us. I tend to go along with Gunkel and others who argues that "This threat is not fulfilled subsequently: they do not die immediately; this fact is not to be explained away, but simply acknowledged".(17) This is not to avoid the issue, but to recognise that to search for a final conclusion is to miss the real meaning of the passage which is focused elsewhere in the verse, in particular in the drawing in of two trees, both with titles that are about order and the power that is eventually of Yahweh.

The tree's title, knowledge of good and evil if we are to agree that it is a formulation of 'J', holds the clues to the thrust of the passage. Not however in the detail, but in the form; ie knowledge of good and evil is to know all there is to know. What is being said however is that there must be a point at which God is recognised as the only one who can know all and humanity, in acceptance, binds itself to God, and is free to enjoy the fruits of the Garden. The relationship however, is built on the act of acceptance,

not the detail of the Knowledge. For the event is symbolic. Westermann argues that 'J' is linking the narrative of expulsion with the creation narrative.(18) The relationship, which is broken in the expulsion, has its significance declared in the creation narrative. The relationship is central to human existence as a whole; the meaning and fulfilment of existence comes through a command of God and our obedience to the command. I would agree with Westermann for the explanation not only attempts to deal with the text as a whole, but focuses on the purposes of 'J' rather than the agenda of the exegete. God's creation is built on relationships that live and move. These relationships depend on one another for the whole to have meaning. It is these relationships that humanity has upset. Our freedom and our rediscovery of God comes when we recover those relationships and begin again to obey Yahweh the creator.

#### NOTES

- 1) Davidson, op cit, p34.
- 2) see eg; Speiser, Westermann, Von Rad, Skinner, all op cit, and N. Wyatt, **WHEN ADAM DELVED, THE MEANING OF GENESIS 3 v 23**, VT 38 (1986), pp32-40.
- 3) Wyatt, op cit, p34.
- 4) Westermann, op cit, p212.
- 5) Davidson, op cit, p35.
- 6) Von Rad, op cit, p81.
- 7) Davidson, op cit, p35.
- 8) Gibson, op cit, p115.
- 9) Von Rad, op cit, p80.
- 10) Kidner, op cit, p68.
- 11) Von Rad, op cit, p87.
- 12) Skinner, op cit, p67.
- 13) Gibson, op cit, p113.
- 14) Skinner, op cit, p17.
- 15) Westermann, op cit, p225.
- 16) *ibid*, p225.
- 17) noted in *ibid*, p225.
- 18) *ibid*, p223.

### GENESIS CHAPTER 3 vv 22-24

These difficult last three verses in a sense present the status quo, the present relationship between God and humanity, the consequences of fallenness. But as we shall see, it does more than that. For we have here not one ending, but two. We find the tree of life reappearing, and some connection made with the final fate of humanity. We have to answer two main questions as we look in detail at the verses. Firstly, what effect do the stories have on one another? Secondly, what theological point was 'J' trying to hammer home about the relationship between God and humanity by tying these two quite distinct narratives together?

Most scholars agree that verse 23 is the end of the narrative about the tree of Knowledge, while verses 22+24 link with tree of life narrative last seen in verse 9. Verse 23 probably is the continuation of verse 19. Westermann cites clear differences in content, style and composition as a basis for this conclusion.(1) Clearly there is not yet before scholars an alternative argument that stands the tests we require so we shall work on the basis that this two in one theory is, at present, correct. We need to look in each verse in turn but then draw our conclusions both from the two separate narratives and the effect of their being clearly and deliberately intertwined.

**Behold the man has become like one of us:** Spiëser suggests that we see here a reference to "a heavenly company which remains obscure".(2) The comparison is to underline the seriousness of the new circumstances. Skinner, in rejecting the 'ironica exprobatio' of Calvin et al, sees a "serious admission that the man has snatched the divine prerogative not meant for him".(3) Von Rad, in looking for more than irony sees that a comparison with men and gods really exists, arguing that "the plural makes a comparison with Yahweh himself completely impossible".(4) Gibson sees an equality with the angels or subordinate deities around him.(5) Dillman and Gunkel follow similar lines with higher spiritual beings and a heavenly court respectively.(6) Westermann however rejects these for being too literal.(7) For him the solution lies in placing the image in the context of the history of the motif; the important element is not the exact detail but the implied point of contact between the divine and the human in the area of wisdom and knowledge, which is why we have the two tree motifs placed together at the end. Westermann argues that "linking these two motifs the author of Genesis 2-3 stands in a line of tradition in which what defines human existence is seen to consist in the distinction between these two probabilities (wisdom and eternal life). It is enough to refer to the Adapa Myth and the Gilgamesh Epic."(8) Davidson's argument that "the theme of mans elusive search for immortality re-enters the story only when the problem and the tragedy of man have been analysed in other terms"(9) would seem to

back this up. 'J' knows the stories that his listeners will be familiar with, the epics and myths that tell of the deep searches of humanity. So he ties in the never-ending search for eternal life with the end of his other story, perhaps to say why Adam and Eve did fall to temptation.

Having 'achieved the knowledge of good and evil', immortality was the next logical step, or perhaps desire. Skinner sees here echoes of the envy of the gods. I feel here we see a reflective God, (von Rad, Westermann) just in a sense stating the case and restating the limitation that was the crux of the relationship formed by God placing Adam in Eden. This is where the crucial difference between myth as an expression of the nature of how things are and myth as the reworking of history comes into force. What is being articulated here is not the end of a perfect relationship, but the realisation that humanity has sinned by failing to realise its potential for harmony with God the creator. That harmony depended on an order that we have been unwilling to live within. Fallenness is the distance we have put between ourselves and the fulfilling of our potential.

**He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the tree of life too.** Although Davidson and others point out that 'reaches' here, is of the same root as 'drove' of v23, we see not a punishment as in the expulsion but a prohibition that has a clever almost ironic double meaning

of 'for your own good'.(10) Skinner notes that put 'forth his hand' suggests that a single partaking of the fruit would confer the elusive eternal life.(11) Interestingly, Gilgan in the Gilgamesh epic is allowed to take back a wee bit of the plant, only to be robbed of it by a serpent!

Westermann notes that it is only here in v22 that the element of living forever is introduced.(12) The prohibition is about the fruit and of course this is in contrast to the threat of death that was stated in 2 v17 about the tree of knowledge. One wonders if the implication is that as death, if at all forthcoming from the eating of the tree of knowledge, is something imposed by God, so too is eternal life. At no point can it become inherent, in, for example, the act of eating. Or could one act move us from one state of being to another? The way the stories have been drawn together link the verses, so the enactment of the prohibition will have to wait until verse 24. What we seek now is the reason for the linking, without losing sight of the two originals.

Westermann argues that sending forth from the garden is the proper and original punishment for the transgression of God's command.(13) If that is equivalent to death however, then it must be assumed that whilst in the garden eternal life was the order of the day. Thus there was no need for the fruit of the tree of life. The two options that face us are either that there was a divine change of mind, or, that

there was eternal life within obedience to God that could be enjoyed fully; or that eternal life could be 'achieved' by human endeavour alone, but that it would not be as fulfilling in practise as the theory suggested. Thus the apparent inconsistency is really a comment about the benefits of living, by choice, under the command and rule of God.

There has been much debate over the phrase **to till the soil from which he had been taken**. Now there is clearly a creation statement being made here along with the allusion to the inevitable death of humans (3 v19). Whilst awaiting death, most commentators assume, the task before humanity was a much harder version of that within the garden, ie tilling of the soil. There are undoubtedly problems with this because the curse of vv17-19 at least implies, (some would say state clearly), that tilling is to be no more and that food is to come from bramble and thistle; the soil in fact being cursed itself. Wyatt argues that we have got ourselves into something of an agricultural fixation here, most translations reading v19 through v23, which in turn has been used to underpin assumptions about V19.(14) Skinner sees the problem but simply assumes the easy solution of bad editing. Others opt for 'easy and hard agriculture', or a new duty for humanity.(15) Westermann again links creation and command when he says; "his created state (for out of which you were taken), simply corresponds to his duty, and his commission serves the earth".(16)

Wyatt starts with 2 v15 and the first reference to tilling.(17) Coupled with that he makes a link with the king as gardener of Mesopotamian Royal ideology and primal man as king and thus gardener. The common etymology of cult and cultivate offers further support. Adam is Yahweh's gardener. The expulsion symbolises that we have failed to live up to the potential relationship that was represented by the harmony of the worker in the garden. The tilling that we participate in now is not that of paradise; it is not set in the wider relationship of the garden, of creator and created. Wyatt offers a translation of: "Yahweh God expelled him from the garden of Eden and from tilling the soil from which he had been taken". Wyatt provides Ugaritic underpinning for this grammatical change. Thus the expulsion is, in effect, to stop humanity acting as the king/gardener of Yahweh. Our tilling is not part of our potential harmony but a sign of our distance from God. Such a theme of expulsion for prevention of an act is one that we have already seen with reference to the tree of life in v22.

I would like to suggest that there is some mileage in this interpretation, for it deals with the relationship between humanity and Yahweh in the terms of the original frame of reference, (ie the tilling), but in a way that fits in with the terms of 2 v15 and 3 vv17-19. As Westermann himself puts it; the purpose of the narrative is to explain the present state of human existence as "an existence on earth

which is limited by the earth, ie as an existence which is at the same time an alienation from God."(18) There are several levels at which royal ideology has an effect on the thrust of the story. There is the statement of status with implications about dominion. It works as a literary tool in the temple allusions is to be debated. In each these is an underlying theme: no longer does the human race live, in its life activity, in unity with its creator. Given the exilic context of these writings, such an interpretation is clearly as much about the state of human existence as it is about creation.

Westermann, following Gunkel, Bø<sup>u</sup>dde et al, notes that the repetition of the banishment is a sign of the two stories. Most commentators see the mythical figures of cherubim and fiery swords as being of the tree of life narrative. They maintain the prevention theme of v22 and are in line with the more mythically based style of the narrative, (Gunkel, von Rad).

**Cherubim**, creatures that accompany the deity, (Ps 18 v6), with a duty to protect sacred regions, eg; temple or throne, (1 Kings 6 v23). Most oft mentioned source is the Akkadian one of the root Karibu, minor deities, half human half animal. Skinner has a fairly extensive footnote on the Cherubim, noting the Babylonian roots, and their role as guardians of paradise (Ezek 28).

The fiery flashing or swirling sword is also clearly mythological but of a source independent to that of the cherubim. Speiser notes that although it is attributed to Yahweh, it is probably Mesopotamian in origin, quoting as he does the Enuma Elish.(19) Von Rad identifies Oriental roots with a "mystical objectification of lightning".(20) Westermann sees a Sumerian tradition echoed here.(21) Whatever the source, the thrust is the same, that things have changed and Eden is no longer a welcome place for humanity.

There are clearly whole parallel myths to this creation/expulsion story. Von Rad sees real Oriental connections, as well as an allusion in Ezek 28.(22) 'J's objective in the formation of the story was twofold: firstly, to explain how things had got to where they were, and secondly, in commenting on the relationships involved, to explore how things perhaps might one day be different. It is not however a description of an event, but essentially a statement of alienation. Our fallenness is the lost potential to live in harmony, not the move from perfection to imperfection. The relationship was always to be alive and participatory. We have the mistake, as humans, to try to be like God, instead of living within Gods ordered creation. Yahweh's almost kind act of expulsion is not a move from one relationship to another, but a recognition of the alienation from that order. We have the seriousness of the situation but the statement of the

relationship. And we have a picture of Yahweh that is as much beside humanity as it is all-powerful and transcendent one. It is only again in obedience to Yahweh that Paradise will once again be open to those banished from its boundaries.

#### NOTES

- 1) Westermann, op cit, p271.
- 2) Speiser, op cit, p24.
- 3) Skinner, op cit, p88.
- 4) Von Rad, op cit, p97.
- 5) Gibson, op cit, p140.
- 6) noted in Westermann, op cit, p272.
- 7) ibid, p274.
- 8) ibid, p272.
- 9) Davidson, op cit, p47.
- 10) Von Rad, op cit, p97.
- 11) Skinner, op cit, p88.
- 12) Westermann, op cit, p272.
- 13) ibid, p270.
- 14) Wyatt, op cit, (1986), p36.
- 15) Skinner, op cit, p88.
- 16) Westermann, op cit, p270.
- 17) Wyatt, op cit.
- 18) Westermann, op cit, p270.
- 19) Speiser, op cit, p25.
- 20) Von Rad, op cit, p97.
- 21) Westermann, op cit, p274.
- 22) Von Rad, op cit, p97.

## CONCLUSION AND A WAY FORWARD

If there is one crystal clear conclusion that we can make from the exegesis that we have just completed, it is that God created all that is. Taking that one step further however, we find that that creative act had several layers to it; that there is an order, a harmony of creation; that humanity has a central role in that harmony; and perhaps most important of all, that harmony is based on living relationships in which all parts of the cosmos participate.

We have seen how humanity has a task: tiller of the garden. That task is part of the special status that is bestowed upon humanity, and the power that goes with it, (dominion), holds a special responsibility. To be God's representative is to act in the same just way that God would. That task is set in the context of the relationships that make up the cosmos and has its meaning within those relationships. The potential that is within the cosmos, and humanity in particular, is to live within the order that God created, in submission to Gods commands and parameters. To choose not to is to distance oneself from the potential harmony; to leave the garden.

Our model then is one of potential harmony with our creator, set in submission to Gods commands and with a responsibility to use the power given to us to fulfill that potential, not to use it for our own ends. The question is

then, how do we fulfill that potential, how do we discover the harmony of creation, how do we re-enter the garden?

Clearly we have up to now been dealing with a Hebrew view of life. The Christian perspective however offers a new possibility; salvation offered by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The question is therefore, is Christ the doorkeeper to the garden? In the salvation he offers, can the potential of the cosmos finally be fulfilled?

SECTION 2

"Out from the Text"

## CREATION, CHRIST AND THE WISDOM MOTIF

To make this move from the debate and description of the creation event and the relationships that it outlines to the influence of Christ is not a straightforward task. There are clear connections made between Christ and creation by the New Testament writers, (eg John 1 vv1-5, Col 1 vv15 -20). To try to remain true to our text and its context, we must spend some time looking at how this move was first made by the early Christian Church, both within the biblical writings and in the thinking of writers such as Philo. But even that is too far a step. The key lies in the connections made by the Jewish Christian writers themselves: in particular the connections that were made through the personified Wisdom passages. As we shall see, there is much debate as to just what the influence of the Wisdom passages has been, but its effect is clearly there. As James Dunn puts it quite categorically, "the Tradition of (pre-existent) Wisdom has been influential at many points in New Testament christology. In some of the earlier (ie Pauline) passages it may be no more than that language or exegesis has been prompted by specific language used in the Wisdom tradition. But in other cases there can be little doubt that the role of Wisdom is being applied to Christ."(1) To discover something of the effect of both those types of influence, we need first to go back to the Wisdom writers themselves and see how they saw the Wisdom character about whom they wrote.

The Wisdom motif that we have to look at in particular is that of the personified Wisdom found in Proverbs 8 vv22f, Wisdom of Solomon 7-9, Job 28, Ben Sirach 24 and Baruch 3-4. As Claudia Camp rightly points out, there are two main themes to any study such as this.(2) We need firstly to look at the origin and context of a personified Wisdom, and secondly at the theological statements made when Israel took on board this motif. As Camp puts it, "a religious symbol must be interpreted in the context of a given culture's ethos and world view."(3)

Camp's study of the literature, coupled with that of von Rad, Dunn, Murphy and Hermisson (4) tend towards two conclusions. Firstly, that there are clearly some connections with other ancient near eastern cults of Wisdom/creation. Secondly, whatever the elements were taken to mean in their original context, they have been put together in such a way that not only is monotheism preserved, but a clearly Yahwehistic statement about creation and Yahweh's relationship to creation is also made. What both Camp and Hermisson in particular show, is that the Egyptian connections that are noted by most commentators are not to be denied but that the conclusions of the Egyptian cults do not fit with those of Israel, thus a redefinition was necessary. As Camp puts it, "the Wisdom figure appears to incorporate imagery from a number of possible sources and yet somehow manages to reinterpret it in a way not fully elucidated by the scholars who pointed

it out".(5)

That reinterpretation has itself been the subject of much debate. The classical view is that Wisdom theology is creation theology. The main protagonist of this view is Zimmerli.(6) Interestingly however, actual references to creator and creation in the Wisdom literature are fairly few and far between. Hermisson argues that Zimmerli is right, but that he has a negative reasoning; "the God of Israel is nowhere mentioned in the older Wisdom literature, and this gap is then filled "occasionally" by the predication of the creator".(7) Murphy argues however, and I think that I agree with him, that it is too narrow a view that Wisdom theology is creation theology, especially if it is making Yahweh statements about salvation. The danger is that you begin to articulate what is essentially a hierarchy of Yahweh's activities.(8)

The school of thought that sees biblical Wisdom as an effort to see order in human life, somewhat drifts from the fundamental Israelite idea of Yahweh as the ultimate source of all being. Schmid's claim that world order is basic to Ancient Near Eastern thought (9) seems to have something going for it as we shall see later when we look at Dunn and von Rad. It is important to raise it now however because it was Schmid who raised the question of the debate being one not of history but of world order. The creation debate was not to define how and when creation happened, but to

discover what the consequences were for us in our search for God.

In Proverbs 8, Wisdom describes her origin from God before creation. Proverbs 3 suggests that Yahweh founded the earth through Wisdom. Certain key verbs in Job 28 v27 declare that Wisdom was part of creation. Ben Sirach 1 v9 expands to the idea that Wisdom is the mysterious order created in the world and calling all to its origin. In the chapters 10-29 of Proverbs, there are 7 mentions of creation. They put knowing about the order that is life, and about the creation of that life, together in the same event. So that as Hermisson puts it, "creation is not only the basis of regularity, but of a meaningful and satisfactory order of events in the world, a purposefulness of created beings and things." (10) This would clearly fit with the Israelite mind which combined nature and culture Wisdom. Thus to search to know about the world's unity and creation, and to live within it, is part of the same thing. Wisdom in some way plays a communicating role in creation, it tells of the order that is creation, and of Yahweh who is the order.

This communication is a self-revelatory one in the act of communicating, statements are made that involve the being of the communicating force, ie Wisdom. As Hermisson puts it; "the endeavour to recognise the regularities of this unitary world is the appropriate context for Wisdom to ask about creation, for it involves the actual correspondence

between the created world and Knowledge of it".(11) For Wisdom was clearly part of creation in some form or other. And the role played at creation is reflected in the role played now in the relationship between Creator and that which is created.

This communication can never be finite, just as Wisdom itself can never be finally defined. In being broader than the words that describe it, Wisdom becomes something that is alive in itself. A number of writers note the role of poetry in the motif of Wisdom (von Rad, Camp, noting Land, Hermisson). Clearly the Psalms (ie Pss 65, 104, 89) hold statements about creation that are more than just 'God made the earth'. In particular, the chaos element in the Psalms, and also in Jer 60 and 82, Hab 3 and Nah 41 suggest a creatio continuata. "Yahweh's present creative activity is experienced at the festival (Ps 89). Therefore creation is perceived here not primarily as a distant past but as an event which is presently repeating itself. For now the earth would be threatened, would be in danger of sinking back into chaos-if Yahweh had not become King".(12) Wisdom tells of this almighty power and the telling holds some of the meaning.

So how then does Wisdom communicate? What form does it take? There are a number of descriptions of the nature of the personified Wisdom. They include hypostasis, personification of an attribute of God. Wisdom as a

separate divine being, Wisdom is God's self-revelation. Camp finds herself opting for a symbol of the 'the way' offered through the experiences of life acting as guide, protector, exalter, wayside counsellor and cosmic and primeval force. For her, the multi-symbiotic key of poetry is the direction to be taken, though she is not clear about the idea of Wisdom being a real thing .(13) Murphy sees a tension theologically and anthropologically in living between the divine summons and the human response, but again sees Wisdom as something in the minds of the Israelites rather than as a real thing.(14) Dunn argues the case clearly for the personification in some way being the statement of Gods self-revelation, (with suitable qualification).(15) Before we look at that in detail, it is worth our while to look at von Rad's idea that "This Wisdom, this understanding must signify something like the "meaning" implanted by God in creation, the divine mystery of creation".(16)

Von Rad wants to argue for Wisdom being an "entity that belongs to the world", though also not of the world as we are.(17) The Yahwehists had to remain and live in the hold of monotheism but declare some living relationship. That was held in the personification. For von Rad, the event of creation involved Wisdom at the core of the order that still holds creation together (again the chaos concept). It is through order that the chaos is held back. To lose touch with this order is to lose touch with the creator and bring

disaster (chaos) on the lives of the lost. Von Rad sees a divine call held in creation that speaks out to the created. Wisdom is imminent in creation holding in it the mysterious order. This order does not only call, it loves. Wisdom, set out like a lover, offers not simply ethical maxims, but life-changing knowledge of God in the mystery of creation. "It was obviously the opinion of the teachers that man is addressed from creation by a desire for order from which he cannot escape".(18) He argues that although the voice is speaking out of what has been created, it has all the signs of being a divine address. Most importantly, he sees the call that is Wisdom not as an ideal principle or a rationality, but as something which is as real as the other works of creation. This ontologically separated being, immanent in creation calls. The offer is individual. It is not simply to Israel but to all of humanity.

What Von Rad manages most crucially to do, is to tie together the monotheism, the search for order, the personified call, the unique reworking of the Wisdom ideal from its Egyptian sources, the self-revelation of the hymns of praise and the active battle of chaos that is creation; all the influences that made up the idiosyncratic framework of the Israelites. There are criticisms to be made of von Rad's detailed conclusions, but clearly his yardstick is one that we must not forget in our deliberations.

Von Rad's conclusions are close to where I would like to be in understanding the Wisdom motif both in terms of his *Sitz im Leben* analysis and understood meaning of the writers. His view of an objective entity, set in the context of a world order is the clearest synthesis of the issues. I would applaud Camp's qualification that von Rad limits himself to world order unnecessarily.(19) Given the poetic genre of much of the texts, we see something untrapped by anything that is in our perceptions. For the order is not chaos and its self-revelation transcends history and is eventually cosmic.

Von Rad's yardstick, having given us the insight to Wisdom in Judaic terms, must also apply for the next step, the attribution of the Wisdom motif to Jesus, from which we can begin to make our connections between creation and Christology. James Dunn's survey of the issues both in his detailed book *Christology in the Making* and in his jointly written *New Testament theology in Dialogue*, covers the main options in some detail.(20) He then goes on to make some comparisons with the Hymn of Colossians 1 vv15-20, arguing that we find here a hymn that draws on a prominent strand of Jewish reflections about creation. He finds a place for a view of Wisdom taken by the hymn writer(s) that is intended to "identify Christ with the personification of God's outreach to his creation in revelation and redemption".(21) Dunn's argument takes into account the Jewish background of the hymn and the concepts, fits in

with the clear first century monotheism, and fits with the poetic genre of the hymn.

Dunn further notes a parallel with Judaic views of the Torah. To see the law as equated with Wisdom is not a deification of the Torah, nor a hypostasis. Rather it is simply a way of pointing out the "divine significance of the law". Dunn goes further when he argues that "within its original context and its original meaning, Col 1 vv15-20 is probably best understood as an expression of Jewish monotheism. Believers in Christ, who were familiar with Jewish tradition, recognised the appropriateness of the Wisdom imagery to describe the full significance of Christ."(22) In this way, Christ is divine in being the self-revelation of God; a self-revelation that was present at creation and whose message is held in the ever continuing creation event as much as in the words of salvation he later preached himself.

Dunn's conclusions would appear to fit with the survey of Martin Hengel who looks at the son of God in ancient Judaism, through to its effect on NT writers and early Church commentators.(23) Hengel notes a number of points where the idea of a supreme pre-existent being comes to a point of revelation in human form or, in the case of Ben Sira, the law of Moses. "the divine Wisdom, a cosmic entity, is sent by God himself to a particular place on earth and at the same time, takes the form of the law

entrusted to Israel on Sinai.(24)

Philo saw that the Wisdom/Torah is comparable to that architectural plan or instrument with which God created the world. He connected Jewish Wisdom speculation with Platonic doctrines of creation. Divine reason was the mother of the world, bearing the son, which was the world. The Alexandrian Wisdom of Solomon held that we had a 'breath of God', a reflection of his eternal light. Wisdom here is not a daughter of God, but a cohabitee. The Greek influences were widespread. The status of Jesus' post resurrection/exaltation meant that there had to be a redefinition of the relationship between God, the people and the medium of revelation.(25)

Ideas of a pre-existent eschatological redeemer could be read in Micah 5 v1, Ps 103 v3, Enoch 48 v6 and, some would argue, Daniel 7. It was to this and to Wisdom that the new Christians turned. Looking for Christological and eventually Trinitarian consistency, (rather than simply mythology), meant firstly pre-existence and from, that the functions of Wisdom. It is, argues Hengel, "typically Jewish that in the exposition of Christology, pre-existence, mediation at creation and the idea of sending the son into the world were all developed chronologically before the legends of the miraculous birth of Jesus".(26) The Johannine logos and its central role in creation is a logical conclusion of the synthesis of the

pre-existent son of God and the traditions of Wisdom. This taking on of the all embracing functions of Wisdom seriously called into question the function and role of the law in the ordering of the world and the salvation process. Hengel's view that Paul, the former Pharisee caught the essence when he said in Romans 10 v4, 'Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified'. This was the uniquely Christian stance; no longer was law of Moses the mediator of Wisdom: it was the Christ, the one whom they had destroyed using that law.

The Philippians' hymn was the 'final synthesis'. This was a new 'myth'; a man who was also beyond humanity in his nature and being. Jesus was no longer only a model for life but also the source of the real event of grace and divine love. In the Son, God came to humanity and was involved in their deepest distress, united in harmony with their material being to reveal unqualified love to all creatures. This was unique to the Christians. No Greek or Roman parallels apply here; this was their claim for Christ.

Having made that claim, how does this take us closer to the harmony that we search for? We have seen how Wisdom, (and in consequence Christ), has a sense of being the meaning and power of creation, its inherent order that calls all back to the maker. It is as much that role in the Harmony as his life that makes Christ God's self-revelation, for the Harmony itself reveals God. We have seen how we have

moved with Christ from the legalistic view of living in order to one where Christ's life in ours is the key. But does this take us in any way back to the life that we saw outlined in the creation stories? What difference does Christ make in our search for the Harmony that is life as tillers of the garden?

#### NOTES

- 1) J.G.D.Dunn, **CHRISTOLOGY IN THE MAKING**, SCM Press, London 1980, p167.
- 2) C.V.Camp, **WISDOM AND THE FEMININE IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**, JSOT Press, Sheffield, 1985, p21.
- 3) *ibid*, p66.
- 4) G.Von Rad, **WISDOM IN ISRAEL**, SCM Press, London, 1972. R.E.Murphy, **THESIS AND HYPOTHESIS OF WISDOM** and H-J Hermisson, **OBSERVATIONS ON THE CREATION THEOLOGY IN WISDOM**, both in **ISRAELITE WISDOM**, (Eds), Gammine, Bruggerman, Humphreys and Ward, Scholars Press, New York, 1978.
- 5) Camp, *op cit*, p285.
- 6) noted in Hermisson, *op cit*, p45.
- 7) *ibid*, p44.
- 8) Murphy, *op cit*, p37.
- 9) H.H.Schmid, **CREATION, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION**, in B.W. Anderson, *op cit*, p104.
- 10) Hermisson, *op cit*, p46.
- 11) *ibid*, p44.
- 12) *ibid*, p50.
- 13) Camp, *op cit*, p290.
- 14) Murphy, *op cit*, p40.
- 15) J.D.G.Dunn, **THE NEW TESTAMENT IN DIALOGUE**, SPCK, London, 1987, p63.
- 16) Von Rad, *op cit*, p148.
- 17) *ibid*, p148.
- 18) *ibid*, p158.
- 19) Camp, *op cit*, p57.
- 20) Dunn, *op cit*, (1987), p54ff, and Dunn, *op cit*, (1980), p211.
- 21) Dunn, *op cit*, (1987), p62.
- 22) *ibid*, p63.
- 23) M.Hengel, **THE SON OF GOD**, SCM Press, London, 1976, p42ff.
- 24) *ibid*, p50.
- 25) See J.N.D.Kelly, **EARLY CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES**, A&C Black, London, 1985, p86ff, for a detailed resume of the early Churches ideas and assumptions about the Wisdom figure.
- 26) Hengel, *op cit*, p72.

## THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST MAKES.

In many ways, it would be true to say that recent work on ecology, theology of nature, Christian concern for the environment etc, has not really found a central role for Christ. Or, if it has, that role has not really included the rest of creation. To be blunt, the material and the spiritual, so conjoined at the Incarnation, has clearly been slowly prised apart, perhaps another example of the lost sense of Harmony that has been our theme so far. It would, however, be wrong to lay the blame for this at the door of contemporary theologians concerned with humanity's relationship to Nature and the material world. H. Paul Santmire, in his book, 'The Travail of Nature-the Ambiguous Promise of Christian Theology', finds two central motifs in the history of Christian thought about nature.(1) There is the spiritual motif, implying that perfect spirituality, ie full redemption with the Creator, can only be achieved by leaving the material well behind. The opposite motif Santmire labels as the 'ecological motif'. This is 'earth affirming' and essentially holistic in its view of the Creator/created relationship.

In the main, the former view has taken precedence. The Platonic and Neo-Platonic view of spiritual hierarchy and complete separation of body and soul so that only the soul could return to its source (Plotinus's 'the flight of the alone to the alone'), has had a virtually free run in our

theological thinking. Origen and Aquinas set the model by applying this thinking to the idea of dominion, concluding that humanity had absolute right over creation, to do with it as it wished. We have seen earlier just why this classical interpretation of 'radah' needs to be called into question, but its effect had been enormous. The extent of the influence might not be as solely attributable to theological thinking as Professor Whyte in his previously mentioned article would claim, (see Barr, J. Man and Nature-the ecological Controversy in the Old Testament Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 55 for a rebuttal of Prof Whyte's controversial Article), but clearly, the 'absolute rights' model of thought needs to be dealt with for it has lasted a long time.

Many German theologians have continued its theme. For Karl Barth, the doctrine of creation was simply a form of Anthropology,(2) a study of Man. For Barth, Nature was the theatre in which the Drama of human Salvation was carried out. Christ, the central player, was but an actor on the stage of creation, never closer than that. As Hendry points out, his description of the movement of the Logos that was Christ he very carefully put under the headings of 'the way of the son of God into the far country, and the Home coming of the Son of Man'(3). The prodigal son lived on the fruits of the earth but found reconciliation with his father only when he left them to return to whence he came. So the Son went to the place at the end, the place of exiles, and

returned, leading the exiles from that place. Creation becomes the place of exiles, finally to be left.

Moltmann, in his attempt to rediscover God's immanence in Creation restates the necessity of the trinity as the true reflection of how we should see the concept of creation. "Dogmatic theology calls [the trinity] the trinitarian Perichoresis, the mutual interpenetration of the divine person, by which they form their unique community. If this is true, then not through domination and subjection, but through community and life-promoting mutuality, can one correspond to this triune God. Not the human as a lonely subject, but the true human community is God's likeness on earth. Not the single parts but the creation community as a whole reflects Gods wisdom and beauty."(4) Although Moltmann sees clearly the wisdom influences and the claim of the wisdom motif, he concentrates on the Spirit of creation, "the earth is not only the 'Lord's property', but also the presence of the divine wisdom and the communication of the divine Spirit."(5) He clearly wants to bind together the body and the soul, but sees that as a spiritual experience with no clear role for Christ. Natural theology is revelatory but not salvatory.

Brunner also holds to this revelatory role for creation,(6) though he sees it as knowledge of creation to be understood Christologically. "through the creator, the world and the knowledge of the world are destined for each other. Both are rooted in the logos of creation, from it they derive

both the objective basis of existence and the subjective basis of knowledge. This logos of Creation, however, is no other than He who in Jesus Christ became Man and thus revealed to us his secret."(7) Christ as the true 'Imago Dei' makes us aware of our creatureliness but reveals to us our creator. Nature has a final order that is that Creator. Humanity has to transcend Nature to fully know God, but not reject it for it is sacred. What Christ does is to deny some historical paradise to be regained. Christ's presence at creation is the source of revelation and salvation. That salvation is about and for humanity alone. Although clearly Brunner sees creation as sacred, Christ's involvement is in the end about the Salvation of humanity alone, allowing us to transcend nature.

Bonhoeffer, in his classic bible study of the Genesis story,(8) sees creation as the place in which we are preserved by God, despite our fallenness. Salvation, through Christ, is a new creation. In dealing with Genesis 3 v 21, Bonhoeffer argues that; "God's new action towards humanity is that he preserves him in his fallen world, in his fallen orders, on the way to death, approaching the resurrection, the new creation, on the way to Christ".(9) As I have already argued, I find it difficult to read Genesis through New Testament eyes. I have also made it that there is a definite relationship between the curse of Gen 3 v 21 and the stated relationship between humanity and nature. It is more than a waiting room for Christs return.

As for so many others, fallenness for Bonhoeffer is a state opposed to previous perfection. Fallenness for me, as I showed in my exegesis, is more unfulfilled potential than lost perfection.

These theological views are representative of post Reformation culture and theology. They are, as I suggested that they needed to be, Christocentric, but, their Christocentricity is exclusive of creation, or sees it as a tool to a greater good. That is where the problem lies. We have lost a central element of the Incarnation. We have lost the creator side of the logos, the wisdom through which all things were made and in which all things have their being and place. We need to redefine the Christ/Creation relationship to take account of the 'earth affirming' model that was touched on by Irenaeus, Augustine and Francis but long since lost to the power of material technology and personal salvation.

T. F. Torrance argues that we need to see our task as to "save the natural order through remedial and integrative activity, bringing back order where there is disorder and restoring peace where there is disharmony"(10) That integrative activity, that order, that peace, has to have Christ at its centre. But that seems so rare in natural theology. One of the classic books of this debate, Robin Attfield's 'Ethics of Environmental Concern' hardly mentions Christ at all save to underpin a holistic view of

nature.(11) He does argue that Paul in Romans 8 says that every creature awaits God's Salvation (a theme we shall return to), but just how that Salvation occurs is not clear. Andrew Linzey, one of the leading writers in Christianity and Animal rights argues that God wants to share his lordship, Christ surely is the prime model for that lordship, a model that is about powerlessness, humility, and sacrificial love. He concludes:"It may be that in the light of Christ we are bound to say that the weakest have a greater claim upon us".(12) That is of course a conclusion in support of concern for animal rights but it at least has a role for Christ that takes us beyond the human sphere and has a thread the concept of harmony. But is that enough, is Christs role simply that of a model of ecological soundness, about how to live a 'planet friendly' life? It seems to me that the Christ event, involved in creation as it was, surely has more to say than 'wouldn't it be nice if you took care of the earth en route to your salvation?' Where here is the Tiller of the Garden? Where, here, is the Incarnate Christ who came and lived and knew this earth before his death in such an earthly fashion? Where is the Wisdom figure that placed and ordered and knew everything before it knew itself?

George Hendry, in his book 'A Theology of Nature'(13) begins to find a role for Christ that may be useful to us here. This focuses initially on the logos theme which we dealt with to some extent in the Chapter on the wisdom

motif. For Hendry, the Logos was at creation and as such was the beginning of the movement in which the world was created out of God, then met by God in his incarnation and so began to return to him. Hendry continues this 'movement away and returning fulfilled' theme throughout his book, and although I think that he overplays it a bit, it may be of some use to us here.

It is for Hendry, by the Spirit, that the dynamism of the logos in the incarnation and creation events comes alive. The Spirit imitates the logos, and is embodied in the being that is the incarnation. The Spirit then goes to the extremes of separation, dereliction and death, to then finally return fulfilled. Unlike the Barthian view however, this return involves not just humanity but creation as a whole. "It is the mystery of the Spirit that it loses itself in its opposite, and fulfils itself by bringing its opposite to fulfilment in itself."<sup>(14)</sup> Humanity thus marches in the "vanguard of the whole creation as it moves towards the eternal destiny of God."<sup>(15)</sup> Our view of creation has to reflect God's role as Alpha from which it proceeds, and Omega where it ends, which is also back at Alpha. As Christians we have three levels upon which we approach nature. Firstly, we have sympathy, community with nature in its suffering. We see the world not as slave but as partner in the purpose of God. Secondly, we have a perception of nature in the light of the Gospel, the light that is the hope for all of creation. "The resurrection of

Christ is .. the link that binds the consummation of the world to its creation, and the decisive proof of the faithfulness of God".(16) The third level is the recognition of the responsibility that we have in the fulfilment of Gods purpose with nature. Essentially, "the promise of Christ is not redemption from the world, it is redemption of the world.(17)

Hendry's work, although still fairly Spirit orientated, has Christ and his Incarnation as central and that in itself, is a different statement from much of the theology we have otherwise seen on offer. It at least values the earth as being of God and not void of God. We shall return shortly to his view of worship and the Eucharist, for now we continue our search for an earth/God/Humanity harmony that has Christ at its centre.

Sean McDonagh in his book To Care for the Earth (18) suggests that this more holistic view can be found if we look at the attitude to the Divine of other societies. He argues that "the Divine is seen as a pervasive, diffuse Spirit presence throughout the Cosmos, the Earth and natural Phenomena".(19) This argument stands the test of a number of examples; Chief Seattle's speech, Evans Pritchards study of Near Religion and others. All of reality has its own inner radiance, "which points to and reflects the ultimate mystery of God "Christians believe that Christ is the ultimate revelation of the Father".(20)

So, unlike Hendry's work, the Spirit is quickly seen as the key to Christ's Revelation not the other way round. McDonagh then goes further when he asserts that "In Christ, God wedded himself to the totality of the emergent creation. If the story of the universe tells us that each Human being is in a way co-existent with the total story, then most certainly Christ is co-existent with, and a central dimension of, every reality".(21) Here we can see an articulation of the Christ/Wisdom motif in firmer terms, putting the Incarnation as the central feature, which Hendry seemed to fail to do. For McDonagh, the Incarnation is so central that it is to be rightly understood as "an invitation to all peoples to love and cherish the Earth and to find the Divine therein. In Christ, The love of God for creation is experienced in a special way on the cross. The God that is revealed is not one that is outside creation looking in, but a God that knows and feels the pain and trauma of existence, living and knowing in true empathy.(22)

In dealing with the sin in life, we must see it as something that unbalances not only relationships between humans and between humans and God, but also the life-sustaining harmony between human beings and the earth. Thus, for McDonagh, "If sin destroys the harmony between Human beings and the natural world, the redemption, to be complete, must heal and renew the primordial unity and recreate the Earth where ever it has been injured through

human greed and vice."(23) The prophetic harmony of Isaiah 11 is the unity declared fulfilled in the unity that is Christ,(Ephesians 1).

So where does this leave us? We have seen the struggle to break the early view of Dominion, laced as it was, so liberally with the Neo-platonic separation of body and soul. If we are to take the Incarnation seriously it must reflect all that Christ was, and that was creator and sustainer as well as source of our redemption. It must also be able to declare the harmony we have seen throughout our study so far. To be earth affirming means to make new statements about Christ and our relationship with Christ. As McDonagh puts it: "The creative challenge for soteriology in our time is to reflect on how to link the continuing redemption of human beings both individually and socially, with the redemption of the earth".(24) In other words, to rediscover those complex relationships that are the hub of the harmonious potential of the Universe. As Paul Gregorios argues, this may mean taking on board the Eastern Orthodox view that we need to see the humanity in Christ as the mediator between God and the Cosmos. For the Orthodox tradition, the unity of God, Humanity and all creation, that ultimate harmony, is focused on the Eucharist.(25)

In the Eucharist, the ordinary reveals the divine, the natural bears the spiritual, the incarnate returns to feed

the fallen, lets them rediscover their potential. The salvation of humanity is discovered in the partaking of the material, of the fruit of creation. As William Temple puts it in his book *Nature Man and God*, it is the "Ultimate unity of Spiritual and material", (26) the rediscovery of the incarnate Christ and the Harmony that was and is, his being. If we are to truly see God's Harmonious order revealed in all that is creation, we need perhaps to begin at the most concentrated moment of our relationship available to us now with the maker: at the point of the Eucharist.

#### NOTES

- 1) H. Paul Santmire, **THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE-THE AMBIGUOUS PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985.
- 2) K. Barth, **CHURCH DOGMATICS III/1-4**, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1958
- 3) Noted in G.S. Hendry, **THE THEOLOGY OF NATURE**, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1980, p170.
- 4) J. Moltmann, **THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: PEACE WITH NATURE?**, in SCOTJORS, Vol 9, No 1, Spring 1988, p9.
- 5) *ibid*, p9.
- 6) E. Brunner, **CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION**, Lutterworth Press, London, 1966.
- 7) *ibid*, p26.
- 8) Bonhoeffer, *op cit*.
- 9) *ibid*, p91.
- 10) T.F. Torrance, **DIVINE AND CONTINGENT ORDER**, OUP, Oxford, 1980, p130.
- 11) R. Attfield, **THE ETHICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p28ff.
- 12) A. Lindzay, **CHRISTIANITY AND THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS** SPCK, London, 1987, p28
- 13) Hendry, *op cit*.
- 14) *ibid*, p171.
- 15) *ibid*, p172.
- 16) *ibid*, p216.
- 17) *ibid*, p172.
- 18) S. McDonagh, **TO CARE FOR THE EARTH**, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1986.
- 19) *ibid*, p109
- 20) *ibid*, p118
- 21) *ibid*, p118

- 22) *ibid*, p119
- 23) *ibid*, p126
- 24) *ibid*, p128
- 25) P. Gregorious, **THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT - AN ORTHODOX VIEW OF NATURE**, WCC Geneva, 1978
- 26) W. Temple, **NATURE, MAN AND GOD**, McMillan & Co, London, 1934, p486

## THE EUCHARIST AS A COSMIC EVENT

What, in essence, I have argued up to now, is that our reading of Scripture has been distorted when it comes to a view/understanding of creation. The theological consequences of that however, are much more far-reaching. The creation event, as set out in the first three chapters of Genesis, made a clear statement about the relationship between God and creation, a relationship set in a final harmony. That relationship gives humanity a special place in the final order of creation. Humanity's role and life relates to that order, its hub and its harmony. For that relationship to come again, for the potential harmony to be rediscovered, requires redemption; redemption that involves not just humanity but all of creation; animal, vegetable and mineral. (Paul in Romans 8; the groaning and travailing of all creation). For this, we move from the original creation event to the recreative moment of Christ. We have seen that the idea of Christ as creator, especially through the Wisdom literature and the attributes of the placing of order over chaos, begin to suggest a recreative role for Christ. We have also seen, however, how the role of Christ, (particularly the redemptive role), has been focused so much on the spiritual side that the material has been lost. I will argue in this chapter that we need to rediscover the material side of the incarnation to bridge the gap between creation and redemption, to move closer to fulfilling that harmony once offered. We need to see that

"the significance of the incarnation of God in a man within the created world is that in the incarnate Christ the sacramental character was made explicit and perfected", (1) that in the incarnation the relationship between creator and created was finally again in harmony.

Perhaps first we need some brief definitions. By material I mean matter, the elements which are the building blocks of all things, human and non-human. (see eg Peacocke, Temple, Lewis). (2) By spiritual I mean the divine, that which was before creation. By incarnation I mean the ultimate unity of the material and the spiritual; the conjoining of the divine creator with that which has been created, the God-Man, fully complete in both parts of a concrete and unique nature. By sacrament I mean a moment in worship where we assume "an instance of a very definite relationship of spirit and matter". (3)

Peacocke argues that "In the Eucharist, God expresses the significance of the created material order, and through it he is achieving his purpose for that order of protons, atoms, molecules, proteins, amoebas, mammals and man". (4) That purpose is, I believe tied centrally to redemption and salvation for the cosmos as a created, wholly inter-related entity. As Alan Lewis suggests, creation is not the backdrop of salvation but the cast. (5) The participation of the cosmos as part of the final time of redemption happens at the same level as does that of humanity. For it

is with rest of creation as well as the creator that humanity is in harmony.

We clearly need the material things for the sacraments. As Temple puts it, "within the sacramental scheme or order, the outward visible sign is a necessary means for the conveyance of the inward spiritual grace, but has its whole significance in that function".(6) Although his final conclusions were somewhat platonic, Temple concludes that the spirit is not "an alien sojourner in this material world".(7) The question is, are material things simply bearers of the sacred that relates eventually not to them but to us, or is there a statement being made about their sacredness through their use in the sacraments. Baillie clearly sees that there is a way in which the whole material world is "sacramental"(8) but his own Christocentrism, or perhaps more accurately, his own Christology, stops him from seeing the role of the material as being any more than "the visible garment of the unseen realities".(9) I make the distinction between Christology and Christocentrism because I would not like to suggest that this dissertation was anything but Christocentric. What I am arguing is that the unity of the material and the spiritual found in perfection in Christ takes us to a wider understanding of the rest of potential harmony in creation and in its own relationship with God. The Anglican/Roman Catholic commission on the sacrament begins to touch on this when it takes the more eastern Orthodox

line (that there is something holy and theandric in nature itself. Lampet),(10) when it says that "Earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine ...elements of the first creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and new earth".(11) The liturgy referred to by Irenaeus (AD 130-200) expands this understanding within its contexts of words of thanksgiving for the food before them in the Jewish mealtime blessing; He speaks of Jesus as "Instructing his disciples to offer to God the first fruits of his own creation, not as though he had need of them, but that they might themselves be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful. He took that bread which comes from the creation and gave thanks saying, this is my body. And the cup likewise, which is from created things, like ourselves, he acknowledged for his own blood, and taught the new oblation of the New Covenant...we ought to make oblation to God....offering first fruits of those things which are his creatures".(12)

The created order, implicitly sacramental, becomes explicitly so in Christ's life, death and resurrection, giving the material world a new valuation which is captured in the material elements of the Eucharist. Thus Peacocke can conclude that "In Christian thinking, the sacraments as a whole, especially the Eucharist, manifest continually the ultimate meaning of matter as a symbol of God's being and as an instrument of his purpose".(13) If we can conclude that there is something sacramental and thus inherently

related to salvation in and of material things themselves, what then do we mean by sacraments in terms of rituals in worship?

Heron sees two main models of sacrament;(14) one which assumes it is an event where God is acting through the Church, the other where God communicates by 'his' Word to Faith. Both of these have their roots in the Latin Fathers and Augustine's interpretations of the sacraments. Heron rightly points out that the New Testament has no concept of ceremonial sacrament; its 'mysterion' refers to "the secret of God's redemptive will, disclosed in Jesus Christ"(15) For Heron, Jesus is the sacrament in which God and Humanity are united. Jesus is the meeting place of God and Humanity, visible and invisible, natural and supernatural. The event allows us to share in the life of the Holy Spirit which in turn gathers us together "incorporated with Christ, and in him offered to the Father; and by this the whole of creation is recalled to its promised future under the sign of the reign of God."(16) In many ways, both of Herons models have a place in our understanding of sacrament, complementary rather than competing and involving both God's action through our being and our response in faith to his call. This is the view that I shall take here when I talk of sacrament.

How, then, is the Eucharist an experience of Redemption and Salvation? How does it declare the potential harmony of the

cosmos? What, in essence, is the efficacy of the Eucharist? Coupled with that, at the Eucharist event, are we saying that because the material things are already sacred, that there is no transformation, no real presence? Or that material things are sacred in that they can bear the divine presence in the Eucharist; and in being the bearers, they become conjoined and therefore redeemed? These questions are, of course, the content of not a few dissertations, books, theses, perhaps even careers and cannot be dealt with in detail here. This interpretation is therefore, by necessity a brief one.

Given that we see Jesus as the ultimate sacrament, not in the sacrificial sense but in the sense of fulfilling the potential harmony of creator and created to the ultimate degree, he becomes the restatement of the relationship first seen in the creation story; God's representative, God's Gardener. When we participate in the Eucharist, we offer ourselves, empty in faith,(17) to come closer to that unity with our creator, to fulfil the potential harmony, to resubmit ourselves to the creator. As Baillie argues "we creatures of flesh and blood in this spoilt and fallen world do need sacraments in our religion, with material symbols and action, to help us break out of our earthly isolation into a unity with Christ and with each other which at least anticipates in faith and hope and love the perfect unity of the coming Kingdom of God".(18) That perfect unity is in the ultimate order that defeats Chaos,

an order that continues to defeat Chaos, an order that is as much in the material world as it is in the mind, heart and soul of the human self-conception. This is found very much both in the Wisdom thinking that was later applied to Christ and in the temple worship reflected in eg Psalms 8, 89, 104, and that were later echoed so much in the Genesis accounts. The salvation of the Eucharist is therefore, a creative activity. Its efficacy is in its rejoining, reunifying of creation to its creator. It restates that the potential harmony can be fulfilled. "The creator restores his own creation and cosmos only by becoming, in unspeakable humility, part of his creation, and taking upon himself the pain of his cosmos."(19) In the Eucharist we restate that that action of the creator is the source of humanity's potential ability to become again in harmony with our creator.

Being cosmos-wide in its creative activity means that the Salvation of God the Creator is not simply concerned with humanity. Montefiore argues that "in the Eucharist man offers himself to God, in unity with Christ's own self offering, to co-operate in God's own creative work in the actual physical world".(20) But it is more than that. Salvation is a recreation, a restatement of the relationship between that God who created and all that which is created. "A sacrament has significance as a part of a whole, of which true relation to God is being represented and finally realised".(21) The creator has

become finally and fully united with the creation and taken on board the pain of that creation. The material side of Christ, the body that was fully human, was made, as we are, of the same stuff, atoms and protons etc, as the material elements we now use to symbolise his final act of redemption. Just as they (the atoms etc) in the form of the human part of Christ could be conjoined in the relationship of order that is creation, so, too, in the form of bread and wine they hold the moment of ultimate harmony of relationship between the creator and the created. We have moved from the old idea that creation is simply the vehicle for our salvation, to it participating in that salvation for it is part of that which is in harmony. The Eucharist, as Christ did, gives us a glimpse of the Eschaton, the Kingdom, the fulfilled harmony of the cosmos.

This would suggest that we see in the material elements a restatement of what we have failed to see, rather than a new, transforming presence. In other words, what we have is not a joining of the material things called bread and wine with, in some way the body and blood of Christ. We see for a moment instead, that the joining of creator and created as experienced in Christ as the sign of redemption, is something that happens for all of creation. The sacramental character of creation comes alive in the statement that in bread and wine in the Eucharist, it can and does symbolise the Incarnation. Thus the material world is sacred because it is, as we are, full participants in the restated

relationship between the creator and the created. God walks again in the garden and we can participate in the life of the garden. Our task of being in dominion can be begun again in the rediscovered harmony of the cosmos. In it, we act in submission to God, and are free to do God's will and participate in the promised Kingdom.

But there are questions to be asked here about that participation. What is being created? Is this a redressing of a lost balance or a new final creation? Was that which we saw as creation not a complete creation but one waiting, in the final eschaton, to be completed?(22) Or do we see here the restated relationship between God and creation that once was lost?(23) Alan Lewis argues that "Heaven and Earth will not finally have been created until they have been remade, and every thing that threatens, negates and destroys them has been forever removed."(24) He suggests that the creative purpose is to express God's being and in that to reveal again the ultimate unity that is creation. He says that "there are clear echoes in the resurrection and the original creation, and a parallel between what God does in Genesis in the making of all things out of nothing and what he is doing in Christ, from Easter, through Pentecost, to the Eschaton."(25)

To suggest a remaking implies either a imperfect prototype that God has to remodel, or a fallenness of creation that assumes matter as being evil.(eg Augustine and his never

quite shaken-off Manacheian struggles with the duality of existence). Neither was the creation event a botched job nor did the produced matter ever become evil. What I have argued is that the central issue is the potentially harmonious relationship between God and creation that has humanity at its hub. That relationship has not been fulfilled, and needs to be restated and recognised. We participate in that restatement in the first instance in the Eucharist. It is a relationship of freedom in submission to God's command and action in the way in which we again till the Garden that is non-human creation. We, in our humanity are the broken link in which that which is created should adore its creator in its life and being. We scar the earth with our lives rather than revere it with our hearts. We don't see the life that is in it, which is in the end, God. Christ, in the incarnation, restated the relationship where the material joins with, in full unity and harmony, the divine. If we are to enter into the harmony with our maker that we glimpse happening in the Eucharist, we have to feel and know the order that declares that harmony with the maker, who is in and about all we know.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist we find a clear statement of the sacredness of matter, (see eg Temple, Baillie, Lewis, Hendry,) and a clear setting of the cosmos wide parameters of salvation. (Heron, Baillie, Montefiore, McDonagh). The Incarnation is the event that allows the

Eucharist, the ultimate unity. The Eucharist is a moment of redemption, where God and creation are reunited in a pure relationship. It is a cosmic event. It is when all that is created moves towards the discovery that it may return to being the Garden in which the Creator once walked (Gen 2). Our ability as humans to acknowledge this does not deny the necessity of material participation in the Eucharist, (Temple, Montefiore), or that the material elements are but bearers of the good news, to be left behind in our final salvation. (Peacocke, Lewis).

Does this restatement happen in the Eucharist then, or is the Eucharist a more preparatory event for the final eschaton in which creator and created will finally be rejoined into the unity and fulfilled harmony that was revealed in the Incarnation? In a sense it is something of both. If we return to Heron's two models, we see that both views are required to sit in the two-model, complementary approach that I stated earlier. That two-model approach holds together the idea that in the Eucharist, God is both acting through the church in the world and calling us to him/her through the Word in faith. In this case, we have challenged the idea that the recreation seen in the Eucharist is of an unfinished model or a thing to be purged of its evil. Instead, we have moved the creative elements of God's power that we see again in the Eucharist, away from the static 'beginning', to a continual sense of the potential harmony with and in the order of creation. As

Alan Lewis puts it, "the creation declared at the beginning of the [Apostles] creed is not forgotten by the time we recognise the resurrection of the living Christ. Christ is real for us today and we recognise his indwelling in us".(26) That movement is a continual one. Just as a creedal confession is both a statement of what is and what shall be, so the Eucharist is a moment of conjoining, the expression of the harmony of order, and the glimpse to the time beyond, when all of the cosmos shall be again fully in unity with the creator. In being the place of Eucharistic celebration, the church must both, for the time being, be the place of the Garden, working out the harmony without being exclusive, and await the ultimate fulfilment of that harmony in the final eschaton, the second coming, the time of the new heaven and the new earth.

That, of course, leaves a great challenge to the church. Having not only begun to move to a new doctrine of creation and thus redefined the parameter and character of the redemption event, the church has to live in creation and be true to its new vision and understanding that says all that exists is potentially the place of God. Even in the pain and anguish that is the reality for so much of this earth, new life can be seen. Seeing God in all that is, we return, in a sense, to our initial discussions of the temple and the garden; only Yahweh has the power to let the relationship happen, but we, in faith, must approach that new possibility in all our living and being. We begin it

in the Eucharist, but it does not end there. The recent JPIC conference in Basle concluded that "the highest destiny of humanity...is to seek here and now divine peace and justice, in awareness of our solidarity with the whole of God's creation."(27) How we might do that is the subject of the next, and final chapter.

#### NOTES

- 1) A.R. Peacocke, **MATTER AND THE THEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES - A SACRAMENTAL VIEW**, in **THINKING ABOUT THE EUCHARIST**, ed T.Ramsey, SCM Press, London, 1972. p16.
- 2) *ibid*, Temple, *op cit*, A.E.Lewis, **THEATRE OF THE GOSPEL**, Hansel Press, Edinburgh, 1984. Ld
- 3) Temple, *op cit*, p491.
- 4) Peacocke, *op cit*, p34.
- 5) Lewis, *op cit*, p6.
- 6) Temple, *op cit*, p482.
- 7) *ibid*, p487.
- 8) D.M.Baillie, **THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS**, Faber and Faber, London, 1957, p5.
- 9) *ibid*, p5.
- 10) E. Lampete, Orthodox theologian, noted in *ibid*, p44.
- 11) The Agreed Statement on the Eucharist of the International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission.
- 12) noted by Peacocke, *op cit*, p18.
- 13) *ibid*, p19.
- 14) A.Heron, **TABLE AND TRADITION**, Hansel Press, Edinburgh, 1983, p155.
- 15) *ibid*, p155.
- 16) *ibid*, p156.
- 17) J.MacIntyre, **THE AVAILABILITY OF CHRIST**, Scottish Church Society, Edinburgh, 1963, p4.
- 18) D.M.Baillie, **THE MEANING OF HOLY COMMUNION**, Iona Community Publishing Dept., Glasgow, p12.
- 19) Lewis, *op cit*, p21.
- 20) H.Montefiore, (ed), **MAN AND NATURE**, Collins, London, 1975, p60.
- 21) Peacocke, *op cit*, p21.
- 22) see eg; J.Moltmann, **GOD IN CREATION**, SCM Press, London, 1985. Teilhard de Chardin, **HYMN OF THE UNIVERSE**, Collins, London, 1965.
- 23) eg; Temple, *op cit*, Peacocke, *op cit*.
- 24) Lewis, *op cit*, p27.
- 25) *ibid*, p27.
- 26) *ibid*, p26.
- 27) Final Document of the European Ecumenical Assembly; Peace with Justice for the whole of Creation, Basle, June 1989, p10.

## TILLING THE GARDEN AGAIN

I have argued that, having reread the creation story, we discover not only a new understanding of our place in the cosmic order of things, but also how that place, lost for so long, can be rediscovered in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, in the central ritual of the Eucharistic celebration of that life, death and resurrection, we glimpse the offered redemption and salvation of life in harmony with the creator that is open to all that is created. As I have said, however, what is glimpsed and known is both of the Eschaton and of now. The efficacy of the Eucharist is real for now as well as being a preparation for the final saving relationship in harmony that was first seen in the Incarnation. That has consequences for the Church not only as an organisation, but as the people who, far beyond the human structures are the Church and as such the living body of Christ on earth. If exegetically we have discovered that our understanding of Dominion is not one of exploitation, then what does that mean for our lives as Christians? If, in the Eucharist we see a renewed statement of the ultimate harmony that is creation seen in the Garden of Eden, (or at least, as we saw earlier, articulated by the Eden story), do we, then, have to become again as "Gardeners" under the will of God, tilling the soil and tending the garden that is creation? Certainly, our changed understanding would imply a different life orientation, perhaps a rediscovery of the

true source of life-fulfilment declared by the harmony that is held in the Incarnate Christ of the cosmos. Ian Bradley, in his new book 'God is Green' would go further and argue that; "we badly need in the West to rediscover a sense of Jesus as the one who holds all things together, to rediscover the cosmic dimension of Christ that has been lost in centuries of anthropocentric thinking about purely human salvation".(1)

This chapter is about consequences of making that rediscovery, set in the context of the debate as we have seen it up to now. It is an attempt to articulate the necessary framework of thought that follows from and underpins this new life-view. It is not the simple articulation of theologically underpinned 'green policies'. They may be concluded as a result of taking on board this new framework, but such policies are not themselves the immediate task of the theologian. The theological task is to till the ground from which political conclusions have their nourishment. It is not to find theological justifications for already concluded political assumptions.

To take such a stance could put us in danger of being either too abstract or esoteric. It may be argued that the issues are clear, environmental concern is crucial and redistribution of resources absolutely necessary for the survival of the planet and its inhabitants, human and non-human. It has often been argued on another, but not

unrelated issue, that there is no need of a theology to tell you that millions A) are starving, B) we are not and C) we should do something about it.(2) That is true, but what is also true, and what this dissertation has tried to deal with, is that much of the way of life that has produced the state of affairs we now know, is based on a frame of reference that needs to be challenged, not just because of the moral or social concerns that it involves, but because it has had a theological/biblical underpinning. In a sense the root of the problem lies not simply in the political policies of world powers, but in the mind sets that make the political decisions. Christianity has played a very crucial part in the formation of those mindsets, and so must offer not simply moral or ethically sound solutions to the specific problems, but an alternative way of thought that will begin to ensure that the problems do not recur again.

The question is then, how we can begin to return to the ways of the Garden? Clearly I am not the first to attempt such an exercise: Passmore's dependence on western Democracy and market forces, Alan Lewis', Sean McDonagh's and Ian Bradley's centrality of worship, especially the Eucharist, Rosemary Reuther's connection of Women's liberation, Ecology and Social revolution, Henry's 'marriage' analogy, Moltmann's revolution, Tiedhard de Chardin's offering of the cosmos to God, Thomas Sieger Derr's incentive by legislation, Montefiore's application

of 'Gods vision for the world' as a yardstick for political policies, the final report from the Basle conference on JPIC with its combination of demands on Governments and guides for rediscovering personal spirituality,(3) along with many others are all attempts to set down the frame of thought that will reclaim the theological context from which political policies that reflect a new understanding of our relationship with our Maker and the non-human part of the Maker's creation can be formed.

There are three central elements in my framework: Dominion, Stewardship and Harmony, each of which we have already seen permeating out of our discussions up to now in some form or other. They will each have some element of implied or suggested activity in their articulation, but they will not be justified by that activity nor seen as valid solely because of the activity they inspire.

The first step then is to look again at the concept of Dominion. In rejecting past understandings of Dominion, we cannot ignore the idea of Dominion itself, for it is still there in the bible. Psalm 8 asks, 'what is man that thou art mindful of him', with the reply; 'Thou has given him Dominion over the works of thy hands'. As my earlier exegesis shows, biblical ideas of Dominion are not about using the powerless for the benefit of the powerful, but about a special responsibility in the living of life with all that is created. The word viceroy has been used as an

analogy and despite its unfortunate connotations of the misuse of colonial power in an earlier era, it holds something of what we are looking for. For clearly there lies a great responsibility with the fact of Dominion. The actions that are a result of the power of dominion can no longer be exploitative. If we are to be in the image of God, we have to see that the things for which we are responsible are, in themselves good, they have value in their own existence. The creation and the blessing of Genesis 1, vv26-28 charge us to look after nature as a King would his people. It is not unlike the old Scottish clan concept of where a Clan Chief held the land in trust for his people, protecting it and using the power invested in him for the benefit of the clans life. There is, as I have shown in my exegesis, a clear idea of a relationship that is expressed in the form of a task. If the task is going well, then the relationship will be as it was intended to be. The new messiah of Isaiah's prophecy has dominion over the kingdom (Isa 9 v5), and will secure it and sustain it in boundless peace, fair judgement, and integrity. Because of his rule of integrity, a new harmony of nature is rediscovered (Isa 11, vv6-8), where there is no hurt, no harm, and all shall know God. Dominion is a task that is of protection and peace, one that values things just because they exist and are part of creation.

The use of biblical imagery to express the vision of true dominion relationship is all very well but it does not take

us far enough in our search for a frame of reference. We may have admitted a new meaning for dominion, (or perhaps rediscovered the old one), but we need to deal in greater detail with how that will affect our lives and our relationship to God and God's creation. What are the consequences of the task of being in Dominion?

The task has often been outlined as a theology of Stewardship, sort of world caretakers. Genesis 1, v28 and 2, v15 have both been used to articulate this idea of our task as being to use the resources wisely, to remember that they are entrusted to our care. In being good stewards, (or gardeners), we can act as 'God's viceroy', carefully tending creation and remaining under God's will and command. We remain accountable to God but still creative in our lives' work. It is a lifestyle that promotes a caring for creation at a level broader than simply the needs of humanity.

But is this really what is meant by God's gardener? Does it really value creation as we have seen that it should be valued? Does it really challenge the present ecological crisis that faces us enough to inspire change? It seems to me that most ideas of stewardship are still essentially anthropocentric. These ideas still place humanity in what is in essence a managerial relationship to creation and the understanding of sacredness that we have been arguing is central to any view of creation is lost. This is a

sacredness that is expressed in a living, real relationship. Paulos Gregorious argues this when he says in his book 'the Human Presence'; "Replacing the concept of Domination with the concept of stewardship will not lead us very far, for even in the latter lies the hidden possibility of the objectification and alienation which are the root causes of the sickness of our civilisation....We would reduce nature to 'nothing but', that is, nothing but an object given into our hands for safe keeping and good management".(4) Clearly Stewardship in itself is not a bad way of thinking, but it needs to be a lot broader if it is truly to redress the balance in our rediscovery of our relationship with God and with all that God has created.

If we move from the creation themes to the life of Jesus as we did earlier in this study, we may find a guide to our next step. Jesus wasn't simply a steward of creation, he communicated with it. He understood it and used it to declare God, both by his control over it; walking on the water, calming the waves etc, and by his use of analogy, for example in the famous passage in Matthew 6 about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. There was a great sense of seeing God revealed in the order that is creation; eg his parables of mustard seeds and wheat and vineyards. His own redemptive task in his life saw glory in all things, yet he was in the end, for his life to be fulfilled, subject to God's will in the way he communed with nature.

This view of Jesus, as we have seen, is not new. The Wisdom literature that was applied to Jesus as the basis of the Early Church's understanding of his nature and being, are in this theme. Jesus, seen as the personified Wisdom figure, was seen as having had a part to play, not just in the creation event, but in what the created order would be able to declare now. He and Wisdom revealed the order of creation. We noted, for example, the Ben Sirach Wisdom idea of a mysterious creating order that was calling creation back to its origin. the Jewish search for order is clearly an echo of this sort of thinking. Jesus as the Wisdom figure holds for creation the self-revelatory role of which Jesus himself was the ultimate example. Von Rad's meaning implanted in creation which identifies Christ with God's outreach through his creation and Tiedhard de Chardin's idea that "the universe is physically impregnated to the very core of its matter by the influence of Christ's super-human nature"(5) would be relevant to our understanding here. We move from life under the law to the life that finds in creation, not just the sense of order in life represented by the law, but also the Harmony, seen in the declaration of Christ by his life and death. This harmony was manifest in the Incarnation and is glimpsed in the Eucharist; where the material is set again in its intended relationship with the divine; where the call of the Creator can be heard again, God's glory and God's grace is manifest in the Harmony.

This idea of the ultimate Harmonious relationship has a number of key points. Based on the rediscovered understanding of Dominion (Gen 1 vv26-28) that we outlined earlier, it has at its centre the task first articulated by the Garden story (Gen 2 v15), part of which is the element of stewardship that we saw earlier. It recognises that God created all that is by creating order from chaos. That created order has a value in and of itself. It is in the Harmony that is creation and is that which reveals God as Christ did. This is to be seen not only in Genesis 1, but also in Psalms, Job's concluding chapters and doxologies such as Revelation 4, v 11. In submission to God's will we begin again to be fully part of that order which is the basis of the Harmony of life. Our fulfilment will be found in living out that task, a task that is directly related to the rest of creation. In that lived task, we may again encounter God in the inherent Harmony of creation, as suggested by Ephesians 4, v 6; that God is through all and in all.

The Celtic Church saw the world about them in this way, especially in its worship, based as it was on the ordinary everyday events of life. As John MacQuarrie puts it "The Celt was very much a God-intoxicated man whose life was embraced on all sides by the Divine being". So many of their blessings and prayers and their way of seeing God in the ordinary events of life show this. So many of their saints had clear relationships with God through their

caring and love for the animals and plants about them. Francis of Assisi, though not a Celt, took this to a level few can ever hope to emulate. What was clear to them was that by seeing God in the world about them, their relationship with God, who remained also the great all-powerful transcendent one, was fuller and more complete. Perhaps they were closer to returning to the Garden where Yahweh himself both walked and talked to those about.

This more Theocentric view can verge on the Pantheistic, but if properly understood then the word we seek is Panentheistic; where God includes the world in being manifest in the order that was its creation yet exceeds it. This means that the world is there to participate itself in the worship of God. In seeing God in the world we do not worship the world as God. We worship God with the world. There is a lot of Biblical literature in this vein; Revelation 5, v13 'every created thing in heaven and earth and in all the sea all that is in them crying; Praise and honour, glory and might, to him that sits on the throne and to the lamb for ever and ever' Psalm 89 'The heavens praise your wonders', Psalm 97 'Yahweh is King, Let earth rejoice', Trees clapping and mountains praising, the song of the birds and other images are all part of this wholeness of creation that our worship has for so long lost. We have been scared to encounter God, to hear the wooing that is in the cry of creation, for that would have

taken the focus away from us and back on to God. The long-term attitude to the cosmos demanded by this view is not unlike Pages companion; partner, sharer of life.(6) Some of the Wisdom literature about created order has been described as wooing like a lover the human race back to its maker. I would not wish to trap all relationships into a lover model, for we love in more than one way. Clearly, however, there is a call for commitment to creation that means moving to a new way of life, a new set of relationships based on a love for creation that was first taught by God our Creator and later restated by Jesus.

A Christian commitment to God's creation must challenge the dominant framework of thinking about the world and offer a new vision for societies. It would be true to say that Harmony as a driving concept may seem very weak and idealistic as a challenge to the present framework. It certainly appears to fail dismally to deal with the harsh realities of living in today's world, where as much pain and grief is caused by natural disasters as by human greed and distance from the Creator. But God's ultimate Harmony is not to be seen in terms of a romanticised God of 'peace love and the misty hilltop'. To be in Harmony means to value equally not just the things of creation themselves, but the relationships that they are in with each other. Relationships being in harmony means allowing food chains to operate properly, not destroying them or usurping them either for our own food needs, or for our

other desires. It will not stop violence in nature, but we should not be so anthropocentric as to either place our values on the ecocycles of nature, or to assume that nature's violence justifies our own. Our cultivation has to have human nutritional need as its central motivating force, but not at the final disruption of the food chains of other creatures. That food was provided for them by God.(Gen 1).If the idea of an ultimate harmony is seen not so much as the ideal objective that we can create, but as the order that God has created, it has a different power and authority. What we are trying to discover is not how to be harmonious on our own terms, but in terms of the harmony that is inherent in the interrelationships of the cosmos, that we, by trying to run things our own way, have disrupted and are now destroying.

In taking on board this new vision, this new way of thinking, we must not be scared to celebrate, to contemplate, to be creative in this idea that there is a Harmony there to be found. The image of the Garden, within which humanity lived as a central part, had those relationships as central to its very existence. It was those relationships lived as God commanded that gave the Garden its meaning and its value. To become the Gardeners again, we need to see that it is not just what we do to creation, or how we do it, but what we see in and of the relationships of all of creation. Our task, our life as tillers in the garden, is set within in sight of that

Harmony, in our relationships with creation, with other and with all that is about us, as we attempt to discover that wider Harmony that is the final framework of the Kingdom.

#### NOTES

- 1) I. Bradley, **GOD IS GREEN**, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1990, p84.
- 2) See eg; M. Hellwig, **THE EUCHARIST AND HUNGER IN THE WORLD**, Paulist Press, New York, 1976.
- 3) J. Passmore, **MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATURE**, Duckworth, London, 1980.  
Lewis, Bradley, McDonagh, all op cit.  
R. Reuther, **NEW WOMAN/NEW EARTH**, Seabury Press, New York, 1975.  
Hendry, op cit.  
Teilhard de Chardin, op cit.  
Moltmann, (1988), op cit.  
T.S. Derr, **ECOLOGY AND HUMAN LIBERATION**, WSCF, Geneva, 1973.  
Montefiore, op cit.  
Basle Report, op cit.
- 4) P. Gregorious, **THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT-AN ORTHODOX VIEW OF NATURE**, WCC, Geneva, 1978, p84.
- 5) noted in C.H. Cousins, **PROCESS THEOLOGY**, Newman Press, 1971, p252.
- 6) R. Page, **AMBIGUITY AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD**, SCM Press, London, 1986.

## CONCLUSION

To use language such as unfulfilled harmony and tilling the garden again runs the risk of being, to say the least, irrelevant to today's church, and perhaps more importantly, today's society. We need therefore, to draw out from this essentially mythical language the response this new view of the cosmos calls us to. It is at this point that theology and the politics meet. I argued earlier that theology is not in the business of providing ballast to already concluded political programmes. What theological understanding must do however, is find ways to speak the message that it its heart in the language of the listeners; that language may be political, especially in the action it calls for.

Having, from the exegesis. taken a new frame of reference for understanding our place in the created order, I showed how central to any view of the cosmos are the potential harmony of relationships between all that goes to make up that cosmos. Humanity is set in a special role in that complex of relationships. Humanity has the power to draw closer to that harmony being fulfilled, the ability to affect the lives and direction of the other parts of creation. There is, in conjunction with that, an equally important level of responsibility to ensure that that power is used not for the greater good of humanity, but in a manner that is not exploitative of creation. Creation has

a value in and of itself and humanity must respect that. It has become apparent however, that that is not the case. We have disobeyed God, misused that power and no longer are we able to participate in the life of creation as God intended. The potential harmony remains unfulfilled. We need therefore, to try to rediscover what it is to be in harmony with creation, to take the risk of using power responsibly, to take on board this new understanding of creation--even if that is at a cost to ourselves.

This can happen at a number of levels. Worship, sacramental and otherwise, must be central. We need to move beyond the harvest thanksgiving type service where our needs are still the focus, to a more earth affirming perspective. This, in turn, can lead to worship being a place where the injustices that creation has suffered at the hands of humanity can be declared, laid before God, and guidance sought as to how we should respond, leading finally to a rediscovery of the cosmic nature of the Eucharist, something which must become a high priority for the Church of the third millennium.

At the level of national and international politics, the previously mentioned report from Basle has a large number of issues that need raising within the political field. Such stances should be taken by Christians, making it clear that they are Christians, and it is because they are Christians that they are taking these stances. The WCC has

attempted to take this on board in its work on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. It has not shied from making political demands that have grown out of theological study; demands that include proper redistribution of wealth and resources, priorities of food and health for everyone, and a clear call for industry to take a new view of the harm its processes are having on the world from which it draws its raw materials.

Local projects of a simple nature; recycling, nature education and conservancy, city farms, clearing wasteland and encouraging new uses that preserve the green and the colourful can all be powerful witnesses at the, dare I say it, grass roots. But they must all be set in an attempt to encourage people to discover new relationships with each other and the world that challenge abuses of power and do not exploit some of the partners in the relationship. The effectiveness of education by participation is high and should be encouraged. The Church locally and nationally has to take the risks of heightened consciousness that such projects may bring. But it is surely by experience rather than simply words, that people will begin to glimpse again the potential harmony of life in the Garden. Churches should be prepared to re-assess their own contribution to the processes which exploit the earth. This can be by putting pressure on companies that shares are held in, or by deliberate investment in environment friendly companies, encouragement of organic farming and companies that change

their processes to take account of the effect that they are having on the environment.

There must also be changes at the personal level. Rosemary Reuthers book 'New Woman/New Earth' focuses on the centrality of misuse of power in human relationships and she argues that it is at that level that real changes need to be made to ensure that long-term change is lasting change. If we continue to oppress our neighbours then we are unlikely to be concerned about the stranger or the earth. Given the centrality of power in my exegesis, particularly with respect to dominion, I find Reuthers view not without merit. Though I might be less specific about the high level of communal living that she outlines, the emphasis of sharing of resources with such a very practical emphasis holds onto and attempts to articulate the central theme of redefined relationship and a new power structure. People need to be given the space and supported guidance to discover what shared lifestyle means for them, and from there move to the concept of a life not just shared with fellow humans, but with all that God has created.

That sharing must become a redistribution of wealth so that the resource of humanity is fed and educated and able again to take on the concept of harmony with creation. Our aid to those with out must value their culture and make them the controllers in the relationship. Good use of the earths resources may mean some giving up luxury so that

others may have necessity. The order of creation can provide for the needs of creation, given the chance to do so.

I have shown how, in the Eucharist we can glimpse again the harmony of the cosmos that Christ's incarnate life was. As the body of Christ we have to witness to that Harmony in all that we do, in all the relationships we are participants in. To be Tillers of the Garden means to cry for justice for all of the garden, so that all may experience that harmony. Our task then, is to declare God whose power is the life source of creation, to see our maker revealed in the order of life, to live for and under the command of God's justice and peace, and to work towards the day when the Whole Earth will cry Glory, and the Harmony of creation shall be fulfilled.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Attfield, R. **THE ETHICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983
- Baillie, D.M. **THE MEANING OF HOLY COMMUNION**, Iona Community Publishing Dept., Glasgow.
- THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS**, Faber & Faber, London, 1957
- Barth, K. **CHURCH DOGMATICS III/1-4**, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1958
- Bonhoeffer, D. **CREATION AND FALL**, SCM Press, London, 1959
- Bradley, I. **GOD IS GREEN**, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1990
- Brandon, S.G.F. **CREATION LEGENDS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1963
- Brunner, E. **CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION**, Lutterworth Press, London, 1966
- Camp, C.V. **WISDOM AND THE FEMININE IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**, JSOT Press, Sheffield, 1985
- Cousins, C.H. **PROCESS THEOLOGY**, Newman Press, 1971
- Davidson, R. **GENESIS**, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1973
- Derr, T.S. **ECOLOGY AND HUMAN LIBERATION**, WSCF, Geneva, 1973
- Dunn, J.D.G. **THE NEW TESTAMENT IN DIALOGUE**, SPCK, London 1987
- CHRISTOLOGY IN THE MAKING**, SCM Press, London, 1980
- Elkin, E.P. **SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN MELENESIA**, OUP, London, 1953
- Gibson, J.C.L. **DAILY STUDY BIBLE - GENESIS**, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1981
- Gregorious, P. **THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT - AN ORTHODOX VIEW OF NATURE**, WCC, Geneva, 1978

- Gunkel, H. **THE INFLUENCE OF BABYLONIAN MYTHOLOGY ON THE BIBLICAL CREATION STORY**, in **CREATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, editor B.A. Anderson, SPCK, London, 1984
- Heidel, A. **THE BABYLONIAN GENESIS**, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963
- Hellwig, M, **THE EUCHARIST AND HUNGER IN THE WORLD**, Paulist Press, New York, 1976
- Hendry, G.S. **THE THEOLOGY OF NATURE**, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1980
- Hengel, M. **THE SON OF GOD**, SCM Press, London, 1976
- Hermisson, H-J. **OBSERVATIONS ON THE CREATION THEOLOGY IN WISDOM** in **ISRAELITE WISDOM**, Editors: Gammie, Bruggerman, Humphreys, and Ward, Scholars Press, New York, 1978
- Heron, A. **TABLE AND TRADITION**, Hansel Press, Edinburgh, 1983
- Jung, C.G. **PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION**, Yale U.P., New Haven, 1938
- Kelly, J.N.D. **EARLY CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES**, A. & C. Black, London, 1985
- Kinder, D. **GENESIS**, Tynedale Old Testament Commentaries, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1967
- Levi Strauss, C. **STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**, Penguin Books, London, 1968
- Lewis, A.E. **THEATRE OF THE GOSPEL**, Hansel Press, Edinburgh, 1984
- Lindzay, A. **CHRISTIANITY AND THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS**, SPCK, London, 1987
- McIntyre, J. **THE AVAILABILITY OF CHRIST**, Scottish Church Society, Edinburgh, 1963
- Moltmann, J. **GOD IN CREATION**, SCM Press, London, 1985
- THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: PEACE WITH NATURE?**, in SCOTJORS, Vol 9, No 1, Spring 1988
- Montefiore, H. Editor **MAN AND NATURE**, Collins, London, 1975

- Mullard, A.R. **THE MEANING OF EDEN**, VT 34, 1984
- Munz, P. **WHEN THE GOLDEN BOUGH BREAKS**,  
Routledge, Kegan and Paul, London, 1973
- Murphy, R.E. **THESIS AND HYPOTHESIS OF WISDOM** in  
**ISRAELITE WISDOM**, editors Gammie,  
Bruggerman, Humphreys, and Ward,  
Scholars Press, New York, 1978.
- Page, R. **AMBIGUITY AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD**, SCM  
Press, London, 1986
- Passmore, J. **MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATURE**,  
Duckworth, London, 1980
- Peacocke, A.R. **MATTER AND THE THEOLOGICAL AND  
SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES - A SACRAMENTAL  
VIEW**, in **THINKING ABOUT THE EUCHARIST**,  
Editor T. Ramsay, SCM Press, London,  
1972
- Rad, G. von **GENESIS, OLD TESTAMENT LIBRARY**, SCM  
Press, London, 1987
- WISDOM IN ISRAEL**, SCM Press, London,  
1972
- Reuther, R. **NEW WOMAN/NEW EARTH**, Seabury Press, New  
York, 1975
- Santmire, H.P. **THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE - THE AMBIGUOUS  
PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**, Fortress  
Press, Philadelphia, 1985
- Schmid, H.H. **CREATION RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION**,  
in **CREATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**,  
Editor, B.W. Anderson.
- Shmit, W.H. **WMANT 17**, 1964
- Skinner, J. **GENESIS, INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL,  
COMMENTARY**, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh,  
1910
- Speiser, E.A. **GENESIS, THE ANCHOR BIBLE**, Doubleday  
and Co., New York, 1964
- Teilhard de Chardin **HYMN OF THE UNIVERSE**, Collins, London,  
1965
- Torrance, T.F. **DIVINE AND CONTINGENT ORDER**, OUP,  
Oxford, 1980
- Westermann, C. **GENESIS 1-11**, SPCK, London, 1982

- Wilderger, W. TZ 1965
- Worsley, P. **THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND - A STUDY OF CARGO CULTS IN MELENESIA**, McGibbon and Kee, London, 1968
- Wyatt, N. **WHEN ADAM DELVED - THE MEANING OF GENESIS 3 v 23**, VT 38, 1986
- SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER**, in ZAN 93, 1987
- THERE AND BACK AGAIN - THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MOVEMENT IN THE PRIESTLY WORK**, in SJOT 2, 1989
- C.C.A. **YOUR WILL BE DONE**, CCA Youth, Singapore, 1986
- Anglican/RC **THE AGREED STATEMENT** on the Eucharist of the International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission
- E.E.A. **FINAL DOCUMENT** of the European Ecumenical Assembly - Peace with Justice for the whole of Creation, Basle, June 1989.