

Scripture on the Issue of Ecology

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David P. Russow

I.

Introduction

In 1970, Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer stepped out for the Christian sector to touché the allegations that Christianity (at least the Judeo-Christian ethic) was responsible for the rape of Mother Earth in his, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*. In the work he defined the term ecology as, “... the study of the balance of living things in nature ...”¹ This study will function with that definition in mind.

And, my, how ecology is on the minds of people. Bumper stickers on the rears of the automobiles bear out what’s in the mind and heart of the operator behind the wheel: “Love Your Mother,” “Think Habitat,” “Throw Away; There Is No Away,” “Think Globally; Act Locally,” even, “Friends Don’t Let Friends Eat Meat.” It used to be that such sticky-backed sentiments would also be found on cars whose fish emblems had two feet and the name, “Darwin,” inside. Now, the truly concerned and “fashionable” bearers of the symbol of the fish, with “Jesus” or “IXTHUS” inside, will also have the above same logos as their own peel and place professions; (with, perhaps, the sight and soul pollutant: “Pro-Family, Pro-Child, Pro-Choice,” besides).

You can call the Green Retailers Association at its toll free number, 1-888-968-6933, and find out how to obtain the eco-correct clothing that is made with Ecospun, a fiber made from 1000 percent PET (polyethylene terephthalate), or recycled (post consumer) plastic. These earth and animal friendly clothes (recently displayed at the International Fashion Boutique Show, a well established industry trade show) held in an Eco Pavilion in New York City, can also be purchased with earth and animal friendly care products. All these products combine to appeal to the “ecologically and socially responsible.”²

Tombstones appear along the California ocean beach fronts, reading:

The oceans born – (insert hypothetical date)

The oceans died – AD 1979

The Lord gave; man hath taken away;

Cursed be the name of man.³

And the Doors will sing,

What have they done to the earth?

What have they done to our fair sister?

Ravaged and plundered,

And ripped her and bit her,

Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn,

And tied her with fences and dragged her down.⁴

¹ Schaeffer, Dr. Francis A. *Pollution and the Death of Man - The Christian View of Ecology*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970; p. 11.

² *The Coloradoan*, July 18, 1996 (by Maria Carzis Boyes, Bridgewater (N.J.) Courier-News)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

And our children delight to Elton John's, "Circle of Life," from Disney's movie, *The Lion King*, learning from a cuddly little cub and his kingly father's story, that death isn't death, the earth is really an organism, that the earth itself is alive, and that:

From the day we arrive on the planet
and blinking, step into the sun,
there's more to be seen than can ever be seen,
more to do than can ever be done.
Some say, "Eat or be eaten."
Some say, "Live and let live."
But all are agreed as they join the stamped,
you should never take more than you give in the circle of life.

Some of us fall by the wayside,
and some of us soar to the stars.
And some of us sail through our troubles,
and some have to live with the scars.
There's far too much to take in here,
more to find than can ever be found.
But the sun rolling high through the sapphire sky
keeps great and small on the endless round in the circle of life.

It's the wheel of fortune. It's the leap of faith
It's the band of hope 'til we find our place
on the path unwinding in the circle, the circle of life.⁵

But our children may not have all caught on to the implied viewpoint of this, "... study of the balance of living things in nature ..." their place and the place of everything else, so Vanessa Williams sings out what Disney Pictures produced in *Pocahontas*,

You think you own whatever land you land on;
the earth is just a dead thing you can claim;
but I know ev'ry rock and tree and creature
has a life, has a spirit, has a name.

Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue corn moon
or asked the grinning bobcat why he grinned?
Can you sing with all the voices of the mountain?
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?

Come run the hidden pine trails of the forest,
come taste the sunsweet berries of the earth,
come roll in all the riches all around you,
and once never wonder what they're worth.

And you think the only people who are people
are the people who look and think like you,
but if you walk the footsteps of a stranger you'll learn

⁴ From "Strange Days" by the Doors. Elektra EKS 74014. Copyright, Plydon Records Ltd.

⁵ "Circle of Life." Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Tim Rice; 1994 Wonderland Music Company, Inc. Used by permission.

things you never knew you never knew ...

Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue corn moon
or let the eagle tell you where he's been?
Can you sing with all the voices of the mountain?
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?

The rainstorm and the river are my brothers,
the heron and the otter are my friends;
and we all are connected to each other
in a circle, in a hope that never ends.

... how high does the sycamore grow?
If you cut it down then you'll never know.
And you'll never hear the wolf cry to the blue corn moon,
for whether we are white or copper skinned,
we need to sing with all the voices of the mountain
we need to paint the colors of the wind.
You can own the earth and still all you'll own is earth
until you can paint the colors of the wind.⁶

Kind of brings a tear to your eye, huh? Kind of takes you back to a time when the nature wasn't emphysemic, when the commercial didn't have to show the Native American on his pony looking over the litter, strewn over the once clear and clean land of his fathers, with a tear in his eye. Kind of takes you back to Eden, Paradise, Perfection, the Garden, bliss, Rest/Sabbath, symbiosis: God, man, God's creation.

But in our emphasis on ecology today we refuse to dwell on the past. We are focused. We emphasize the positive and we consume daily servings of Klondike and Snow, the beloved polar bears, formerly of the Denver Zoo. We mourn when Karl the Kangaroo loses his battle with life. We bristle, with hair on edge, that that selfish poacher shoots Samson the Elk, back yard resident of Estes Park. We nail Karl Mayne, 54, of Conifer, with \$9,137 in fines and order him to perform 150 hours of community services for shooting a bear sow and her two cubs. And while the court sentenced one thing, six spoke their verbal death threats, one wrote the same, and 30 used the phone line to harass him.⁷ And we read:

Snowmass Village ...

Officers were forced to shoot the (two) cubs' mother last June after she was caught a second time raiding trash dumpsters. (While) The killing became a cause célèbre, and a candlelight vigil was held by animal lovers.⁸

Some light candles. We say some hug trees. Some throw paint balloons at fur coats in Vail. Some read to their children *The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore)*, and cease saying with Papa Bear, "Piffle!" to ecological concerns, and join him holding the sign:

A good woodsbear plants a tree
For every single one he cuts,

⁶ "Colors of the Wind." Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, 1995 Wonderland Music Company, Inc. and Walt Disney Music Company. Used by permission.

⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, May 7, 1996.

⁸ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 24, 1996.

No ifs, no ands, no maybes, or buts!⁹

Some order AAL's, *The Earthling's Guide to Preserving Our Planet*, not only for the free lunch bag, but for some tangible suggestions that will help "reduce, reuse, recycle." And others will walk into their places of exercise and fitness and be invited to a "Plains Indian Drum Workshop," as was I; (see Appendix A). And still others will receive in the mail a packet, return-addressed, "St. Joseph Catholic Church," from the Ft. Collins, Christian Clergy Social Justice Coalition, containing all that would be 'needed' to participate in a city and Christian Community-wide "Confront Violence – Build Community" emphasis Sunday, as did I. Included in the materials were liturgical ideas and a prayer that I could use on October 12, 1995; (see Appendix B). And some will find humor, satire and human caricature, as did I, in comic commentary; (see Appendix C).

But none of us sitting here at the feet of our Lord and Savior can bury our heads in the sand of inattention, and lack of awareness on ecological issues. We and God's people are surrounded by messages concerning ecology constantly. The topic has become religious and a religion once again. And as Luther once said, "If you don't teach them, the devil will." If we hide behind the claim that addressing ecological issues is not directly part of our Call to proclaim *the* salvific proclamation, then we've failed to apply some of God's revelation, Holy Scriptures. And if it's true, and it is, that the source of Satan's lies is plethora, found absolutely everywhere, and that the God's truth is found in one and only one place, the Bible; and if it's also true, and it too is, that that Word, God's Word, addresses ecological issues, not in and of and for the issues' sake, but as ecological issues touch us who are in and of and for a relationship with God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctified – or not; then we must address what God addresses in His Word concerning ecology.

There are two Life messages of Scripture: justification and sanctification. Justification declares to us that we are alive in Christ, and tells us who we are and what we have been declared to be in and through Jesus with His active and passive obedience under the Law. Sanctification is our life now lived in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Scripture has a lot to say about the "study of the balance of living things in nature." Since Scripture speaks, we, living ones living in nature, listen so our life application may be balanced.

II.

There Is Nothing New Under the Sun

"Generations come, and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows back to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say ... What has been will be again ... there is nothing new under the sun," Ecclesiastes 1:4-9.

Of words there is no end. Of words about our ecology there is no end. How many trees have been felled and rain forests lost to produce the paper on which those words have been written to address the ills of our ecology? But there is so much repetition, generation after generation, age to age, century after century, redundantly reciting the observation that the world, nature, the earth is getting worse. It's been that way since the Fall, we are not reaching a higher

⁹ Berenstain, Stan and Jan. *The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore)*. New York: Random House, 1991.

form of energy and a lower form of entropy. Entropy, like the blob from the old black and white sci-fi, horror flick, is absorbing our ecosystem. But that's nothing new. It just might be "new" to our concerns.

In AD 61, Seneca wrote, "As soon as I had gotten out of the heavy air of Rome and from the stink of the smoky chimneys thereof, which, being stirred, poured forth whatever pestilent vapors and soot they held enclosed in them, I felt an alteration of my disposition." In 1257, Eleanor of Aquitaine, queen of Henry II, moved from Nottingham to Tutbury castle to get away from what she called, "The undesirable smoke." In 1661, John Evelyn, gave this description of his environment, "... the hellistic and dismal cloud of sea coal ... an impure and thick mist accompanied with a filthy vapor ... (is) corrupting lungs and disordering the entire habit of the body..."¹⁰

Over the span of time, the malady of a perfect creation becoming less and less perfect has been spotted and addressed. John Evelyn, wrote in 1662 a work entitled, *Silva, A Discourse of Forest Trees and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesty's Dominions*. In it he, "appealed for the institution of sound conservation practices, drew attention to agricultural encroachment on forest land, highlighted the ecological problems of unrestrained grazing, and warned of dangers from charcoal mining."¹¹

In an interesting book, written from a Jewish perspective, Hagah Hareuveni, talks about concern for ecology shown by Abram in Genesis 13:1-13. Hareuveni writes:

By having his cattle graze among the oaks, Abraham made certain no agricultural areas were harmed ... the Bible gives us one of the earliest examples of ecological importance: the concern for balance between farming and shepherding ...(a) sophisticated sensitivity to ecological balance ...¹²

Abram wasn't the first conservationist, Adam and Eve were. But we can agree that both Lot and Abram realized that, "... the land could not support them while they stayed together," Genesis 13:6.

It is also interesting that Hareuveni describes the term ascribed to the Old Testament land of promise, "flowing with milk and honey." He says, "(There was) ... milk of wild goats among the green thickets. Thickets had wild flowers buzzing with bees (that produce honey.)"¹³ Thickets also attracted carnivores who preyed on wild goats (like lions, leopards, wolves, bears and others). He explains that there was an imbalance when the settlers cleared the thickets. But that a "new balance between farming and shepherding" was created for lasting generations when hillsides were terraced, and untillable land was used for grazing."¹⁴

But what happened to the ecological and agricultural balance in Israel? What happened to the beauty of the land that showed us Sunday School and Bible History pictures of grapes and game so big and aplenty that Israelite scouts were carrying them back to Joshua on poles on the shoulders of two hefty men? Demise and pollution are nothing new:

The Phoenicians founded their maritime empire and built with the timbers that grew on the mountains. These were the famous cedars of Lebanon that helped shape the Egyptian

¹⁰ Klotz, John W. , *Ecology in Crisis, God's Creation Man's Pollution*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971; p. 5.

¹¹ Livingstone, David N. "The Church is to Blame," *Christianity Today*. April 4, 1994, p. 25.

¹² Hareuveni, Hagah. *Ecology in the Bible*. Israel: Neot Kedumim, Ltd., 1974. p. 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

cities and were even used in the temple of Solomon (After being cut and used) Regeneration of the forest was impossible because the cleared lands were heavily grazed by sheep and goats. Many of the formerly forested hills are now completely barren and almost devoid of topsoil.¹⁵

What has been will be. There was May, 1989, and the Exxon Valdez dumping 10 million gallons of crude oil off the coast of Alaska killing thousands of cute sea otters, scads of all types fowl and fish and disrupting the habitat for years. And there will be the concerned addressing the issues, like President Theodore Roosevelt with Gifford Pincher, chief of the U. S. Forestry Service, and the Chairman of the Inland Waterways Commission, at his side, calling for a conference of all the governors and producing a “Declaration of Principles” document, in 1908, seeking to begin protection of parks and resources in our nation.¹⁶ And there will be places like Donora, PA, population 12,500, in the valley of the Monongahla River, surrounded by bluffs 450 feet high around the city, being filled with a heavy smoke from coal mines on Tuesday, October 26, 1948. By the following Sunday 10 were dead, and by the end of the ‘atmospheric inversion,’ 22 were dead, and 5,910 others were ill. So thick was the smoke that rescue personnel were unable to see to drive their vehicles to locations, and hearses had to be guided by the mortician who walked to the graves.¹⁷ And then there will be ethical discussion on environment initiated with such quotes as: “The great fault of all ethics hitherto has been that they believed themselves to have to deal with only the relation of man to man,” (Albert Schweitzer).

There is nothing new under the sun. Like an aging maiden, our globe’s beauty does not come from outward adornment - and yet she is still beautiful. This maiden, in her marriage to her master, man, has been used and abused, and she has been left scarred and disfigured. *The Flood* changed her. Sin’s result has left her complexion pocked with graveyards, sepulchers, and crematories. The night sky of orange and blue followed by stars you can almost reach out and touch cause our eyes to ogle. But then we look around, size up our environment and state with Martin Luther, “The world seems to me like a decayed house, David and the prophets being the spars, and Christ the main pillar in the midst, that supports all.”¹⁸

This world is hanging in there for a spiritual purpose. This world hangs in there because of the Word. This world hangs together because, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together,” Colossians 1:16-17. Thus this world will hang in there, displaying ecological demise and concern, until time ends. As Augustine said, “The world, doubtlessly, was not made in time, but together with time.” When the last second ticks, this world ends. Until then there will be no new ecological catastrophes unlike what this world has come to know, nor will there be any new sentiment, concern, or action. When we seek to apply Scripture to the issues of ecology, we’re not talking about something, “new.”

III. God Made the Sun and It Still Shines

¹⁵ Klotz. op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁶ Klotz, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-14.

¹⁸ Kepler, Thomas S., editor. *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979. p. 93.

Yes, man has, in many ways, made a wasteland out of what God made perfectly. Yet, who is in control? “ ... God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth ... ” God, the Creator of all, has allowed wastelands, even for His purposes. Hear what He says as He responds to the plaintiff cry and complaint of Job. “Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? I gave him the wasteland as his home the salt flats as his habitat. He laughs at the commotion in the town; he does not hear a driver’s shout. He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any green thing,” Job 39: 5-8.

Earlier in His “defense” God asked Job where Job was when He set the heavenly bodies in their courses ... surely he had had to have been there, giving God His counsel. Job wasn’t and we weren’t, nor was Moses, who recorded Genesis 1 and 2. But God was and records His own account through Moses’ inspired pen. God made this universe, and He sustains it; creation and preservation.

Because I feel our Catechumens need a handy confession and litmus concerning creation I have them memorize what I call, “The Definition of Creation.” Here it is:

God made all things out of nothing in six, normal, natural, consecutive days, orderly and perfectly, by the power of His Word.

To hold to any other summary or explanation or confession of the origin of all things is error. Evolution is a crock. Theistic evolution is a compromise, and throws the baby out with the bath-water as to the authority of Scripture. The chart from *New Life in Christ* summarizes the difference, and explains the ultimate conclusions about man and creation that must be drawn. Such conclusions have overwhelming affect and implication on the relationship of the Creator and we the created in creation:

CREATION AND EVOLUTION COMPARED:		
	Creation	Evolution
Time	six days	billions of years
Method	God’s Word and decree	only by chance or accident
Man	a special creation	a superior animal
Man’s purpose	to serve and honor God	to survive, serve self
Mans’ responsibility	to thank and obey God	none – but please self

(Bivens-Vallesky)¹⁹

Calov, “The Efficient cause of creation is God, one and alone.”²⁰ Creation so testifies: “The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands,” Psalm 19:1. “The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory,” Psalm 97: 6. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse,” Romans 1: 20. “For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything,” Hebrews 3: 4. “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being,” Revelation 4:11.

¹⁹ Bivens, Forrest L. and Vallesky, David J. *New Life In Christ*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1986. p. 5.

²⁰ Schmid, Heinrich. *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1899. p. 162.

Why create? To God alone be the glory. God has essential glory, then He reveals His glory. Pieper:

It [the glory of the Lords] is, to the degree that it is unfolded, a more or less complete image of the true glory, of the absolute and infinite transcendence of God over all creatures according to his all-pervading presence, his all-dominating power, his infinite grace, and his all-consuming holiness a symbol of his absolute sovereignty, of the one and only perfect God, to whom all creatures ought to render willing obeisance and joyful service, and offer adoration, praise and glory with out end.²¹

The crown of God's glory is His crown of creation, the creation of mankind. While we may not be totally comfortable with Hollaz's use of the word, "animal," (although I do believe he uses it to distinguish from vegetable and mineral), he speaks of us as the cream of the creation crop: "Man is an animal, consisting of rational soul and organic body, framed by God, and endowed at the first creation with God's own image, in order that he might sincerely worship the Creator, live a godly life, and attain eternal happiness."²²

With a spiritual purpose we live our days under God's created and lighting sun. My Genesis notes from Seminary, while sitting at the feet of Prof. Carl Lawrence, yielded some gems about God and us:

The account of creation is used to introduce us to God's saving activity. and tell us only those select things for us to understand God's saving activity. God emphasizes very vital parts. Evolution as a substitute defeats the background of God's saving activity ... The account of creation is geocentric, because man is the crown of creation and earth is the home for man ... We bless God as our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot bless God and curse man."

It would be a curse on mankind if we would not acknowledge God as our Creator and the Maker of heaven and earth. It would also be equally a curse if we would not acknowledge Him as the Preserver of all His creation. Remember we confess, " ... and he still preserves me ... " *Creatio et creatio continuata* (in Latin).

It is interesting to note that the Latin terms used in our dogmatics to distinguish the three areas of the Lord's preservation are: *conservatio*, *concursus*, *gubernatio* – preservation concurrence and government.

Preservation is the act of divine providence whereby God sustains all things created by Him, so they continue in being with the properties implanted in nature and the powers received in creation, (Hollaz) ... The Holy Scriptures teach us that He is an active participant in all that transpires in the world; that nothing that occurs could take place without Him and His active co-operation; that, therefore, every single effect, change or transaction in the world comes to pass only through the influence of God. In this, God is not, indeed, as in creation and preservation, the sole cause of that which happens; for God has given to living creatures a will that is to be employed in actions, and has imparted even to inanimate things a power which we are to regard as the efficient cause of changes, (Hollaz) ... Government is the act of divine providence by which God most excellently orders, regulates, and directs the affairs and actions of creatures according to

²¹ Pieper, August. "The Glory of the Lord," *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Vol. XXIX, Nos. 2-4, and Vol. XXX, Nos. 1-2. English Translation by John Schaadt and Carl Lawrence.

²² Semid, op. cit., p. 165.

His own wisdom, justice, and goodness, for the glory of His name and the welfare of men, (Calov).²³

Keep this mouthful in mind as we will later address this declining habitat we call the earth. And yet, she will never decline completely (or to the point that all of mankind and creation is to die out) until, “ ... the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness,” 2 Peter 3:10-13.

Until that Day, the sun will still shine. “God preserves species and individuals. Species he preserves by keeping the essences of objects from destruction, and imparting to them constancy. Individuals he preserves, by substituting new individuals in the place of those that perish, so that the essence of species may remain constant.” (Hollaz). “God preserves all things by the continuance of the action by which he first produced them. For the preservation of a thing is, properly speaking, nothing else than a continued production of it ... ” (Quenstedt).²⁴

So, are all the tree-hugging, science mongers, just alarmists, if God’s going to keep it all going? Should we be getting all freaked out by reports that:

...during the clean up of 300 miles of Texas shoreline, 15,600 plastic six-pack rings were picked up in 3 hours. In 1987, also in Texas, volunteers picked up over 30,000 plastic bags, 30,000 plastic bottles, 28,000 plastic lids and almost 2,000 disposable diapers. A U. S. Fish and Wildlife survey of albatross babies found 90% with plastic in their digestive system. Over half of the phosphates found in our lakes come from detergents (phosphates accelerate algae growth). 80% of all ivory is taken from elephants that are illegally hunted and 30% of it is bought by Americans. 350 million gallons of motor oil (35% of the amount used in America every year) winds up in the environment each year. In 1965, the Iset river in the Ukraine caught fire when a careless smoker tossed a lit cigarette into the river ... 27 million acres of tropical rainforests are destroyed every year: that’s the equivalent to about the size of Ohio. Only 4,500 acres are protected globally which is the equivalent to 3.2% of the earth’s land mass.²⁵

Or, that:

The U. S. accumulates 3.5 million tons of solid refuse yearly; ... 48 billion cans; 26 billion bottles; 7 million junk cars (with 80 million on the road); 20 million tons of paper ... 50 trillion gallons of industrial waste.²⁶

... Every Sunday edition of the New York Times demands 150 acres of trees for its paper ... Each year 1.5 million acres of open land is consumed by growing cities. 400 acres of California country-side is paved over every day ... 80% of our world’s oxygen is provided by the plankton in the ocean. Some scientists fear that within 30 years, 75% of

²³ Schmid, op. cit., pp. 170-172.

²⁴ Schmid, op. cit., pp. 178-179.

²⁵ Peil, Kevin P. “The Christian and the Modern Environmental Movement,” MI District Pastor/Teacher Conference, Saginaw, MI, June 13-15, 1995. p. 1.

²⁶ Finhaber, R. Paul, *Earth Care Manual*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. p. 14.

the plankton will be dead from water pollution. That's 60% less oxygen for 100% more people by the year 2,000 ...²⁷

Or consider what materials stated from the Pizza Hut, Inc. sponsored reading incentive program, "Book It!" effort for this year encouraged my wife to share with her students:

The National Geographic Society and National Public Radio have produced a program called, "Life on the Brink," a sound journey that explores biodiversity on land. In their Teacher background materials, they stated the following:

Unfortunately, the wondrous biodiversity that makes our Earth so rich and rare is not just threatened, but actively under attack. By this time tomorrow, some scientists estimate, another 70 species will become extinct. By this time next year, some 35.2 million acres of tropical forests will be cleared. And by the year 2015 one-quarter of all existing species will become extinct.

They go on to say that, according to the World Wildlife Fund, biodiversity is in decline because of the HIPPO dilemma, an acronym for the five main threats to biodiversity: Habitat loss, Introduced species, Pollution, Population growth, and Overconsumption.²⁸

Either God is a liar and all His promises of preservation stand negated by "the facts" or they stand true. And they do stand true. For, "Scripture cannot be broken," John 10:35. And one verse of Scripture, mightier than all the words of not only Popes and Councils, but also scientists and bio-experts, that speaks to the issue of God's created sun still shining until the end is this:

"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease," Genesis 8:22.

Unless we've all gone blind, I think there are still rainbows seen in the heavens as the light of the sun is refracted through the water of the clouds. And unless we are woefully mistaken that means that that promise to Noah is to us still *true*! And unless we are merely blind followers that means neither global warming nor thermal winter, neither decade nor century, neither babies born today nor babies born tomorrow, neither scientist nor the devil himself will be able to separate us from the love and care of the Father who binds Himself to that promise and will bring forth the actions and changes that that will be true until the trumpet call of God is sounded!

That's why we can say with David, "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth ..." Psalm 104:14; and, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed," Psalm 37:25-26. That's why we can hang our hats on Psalm 23. That's why we do not have to, "... worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes ... If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" Matthew 6:25, 30. That's why we, "... seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well ..." Matthew 6:33.

And do you know and understand why we can be so sure that God will take such care of us as well as the grass of the field, why *creatio* is also *creatio continuata*, that we will always have what we need, that whatever species He deigns still exist and be are just what will be for

²⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁸ Book It! National Reading Incentive Program, 1996 Copywrite, Pizza Hut, Inc.

our best – with or without? Jesus Christ! The Gospel we so cherish, while in this world, which we also so cherish (but in a subordinate way), assures us, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose ... he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ... I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us ... ” Romans 8:28,32,18. Despite acid rain, the sun still shines for us, because of the Son.

IV. The Pains of Childbirth (Fixing the Blame)

Romans 8, my favorite chapter in the Bible, goes on to say, “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies ... ” Romans 8:22-23.

What a comparison, this earth is like a birthing mother! She is like a dog with fleas on it's back. We're the fleas. She's itching for the day of redemption, when this world will end and this present order, ravaged by sin, will end. She looks forward to her own euthanasia, of sorts. She realizes, so vividly, the torture we brought her. She feels the pricks of the thorns and thistles that God had to promise to man's labor. She hated the taste of the blood of Abel, which cried out to God. Fossil fuel was like a foreign substance to her, injected into her by the force of the Flood and the rot of the bodies of both man and beast, and she feels somewhat relieved when it is pumped out of her: like a stomach pumped of salmonella, like a boil that is popped. Yet, she shivers and quakes because her terra firma isn't so firm and is made more unstable by the elements extracted from her, and by how they are extracted from her. And her greatest horror, which was repulsive to her, to her very created nature, was that she held her Creator on a tree she grew, drank up the Crucified's blood and sweat and tears in the dust He once used to fashion His crown of creation, and then cradled His dead body in her bosom, chiseled out by human hand. It's no wonder she shook. It's no wonder that all eyes beheld the wonder of the darkness at noonday that covered the earth, when God the Mighty Maker died. The debt of sin was paid in full. One drop of that holy, precious blood would have been sufficient, but He shed it all, as a lifeblood for all whose blood should have been let forever, in flames that would not have been doused by it. He died that we might live. Finally, what He earned, and then secured for us by relieving the earth of His dead body, through the resurrection, will grant us life evermore in Perfection, at home, in Heaven.

It's just such a confession as that that rankles the environmentalists and points the finger at us Christians, especially, as being the love it and leave it types; loving the environment to death, using it up, while here, expecting to go to a better place anyway. And many would bristle at this quote of such a Christian that I happened to run across, “A gigantic thank you, of course, to God. Without the Lord Jesus Christ in my life I don't think I would want to hang around this filthy piss-hole we call Mother earth.”²⁹ “The audacity, the unmitigated shame, to call your

²⁹ From dedication page of Howard Stern's, *Miss America*.

“Mother” such a name, shows little if no respect for her,” some would say of such Christians as their faces heat and brows wrinkle and eyes pierce with stern look.

People are to blame. The HIPPO Dilemma, first blames people as the cause for this messy globe.

- Habitat loss. Habitat loss is the greatest threat to biodiversity. When people clear forests for farmland or pave over meadows to build a mall, they alter the habitats that are home to countless species. This, in turn, kills or forces out the plants and animals that once lived there and disrupts the complex web of interdependence among species.
- Introduced species. When farmers in the southeastern United States planted an Asian vine called kudzu to prevent erosion, it grew better than anyone expected, choking out native plants and covering trees, telephone lines and even abandoned buildings. Instead of being beneficial, kudzu has turned out to be a hard-to-control pest. [Many other introduced species have raised ecological havoc in ecosystems around the world].
- Pollution. When a tanker runs aground and spills thousands of gallons of oil, the destructive effects on animals and their habitats are plain to see. Other pollution problems are less obvious but just as deadly, such as chemical pesticides used on lawns and farms that run off into the waterways, poisoning fish and other organisms.
- Population growth. In 1995, Earth’s population reached 5.7 billion, more than twice what it was in 1950. Another 250,000 people are added to the total each day and more than 90 million each year, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Population pressures can result in over-grazing and over-planting of marginal lands that are difficult to cultivate, threatening much of Earth’s land surface with desertification.
- Over consumption. Using up natural resources faster than they can be replenished is not just greedy ... it can be deadly.³⁰

So mankind is to blame for this world’s environmental “pregnancy” pain and groan. Finhaber concluded, “Somehow we humans have succeeded in distorting our values and priorities, in exploiting the Earth and her resources, in polluting her air, water, land and food, and have brought the phenomenon of life into jeopardy in the process.” Why, he goes on to say, is because:

We rely on the adman to determine for us what is and isn’t the good life. We trust the cosmetic manufacturer’s standard of femininity and the care manufacturer’s standard of masculinity. We let an electronic tube raise our children. We insist that our cars fall apart in four years so we have an excuse to get a new one. We pay a high premium for non-returnable bottles, inefficient power systems, exquisite packaging, planned obsolescence, super-whiteners, and ever-increasing supplies of everything. We have learned to exploit, rape, and grab anything Mother Earth can muster from her bowels. The air, the water, the land, the resources, we feel, belong to the strong, not to earthlings. We belch out our waste without regard to consequences ... Maybe Malthus was right in his day when he insisted that with the givens in people and resources available a man could survive only at the expense of 100 others, and could succeed (get married, have three kids, and live in reasonable comfort) only at the expense of 500 other men.³¹

³⁰ Book It! national Reading Incentive; Pizza Hut, Inc. 1996.

³¹ Finhaber, op. cit., introduction.

In the right context, Luther would concur: “The god of the world is riches, pleasure, and pride, wherewith it abuses all the creatures and gifts of God.”³² Human beings, with all that pent-up sinful nature, have unleashed themselves on Nature.

The earth has definite limits, an assimilative capacity which we can’t safely go beyond without severe consequences. The Greeks and Romans, and now we Americans, have tested these boundaries. Our Great Plains and Great Lakes, along with the sooty signature of today’s Grand Canyon, are but a few examples among many. As icons of our contemporary problems they serve to epitomize billions of offenses this grand old earth has weathered.³³

“Offenses” makes me think of sin. Sin makes me think of repentance. Repentance makes me think of Jesus. Jesus makes me think of, have, forgiveness and enables me to bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance.

When Piasecki and Asmus try to address rather than to blame they point out three fallacies that hinder productive action to environmental issues. They are:

1. Things to not change rapidly.
2. Government and industry are natural enemies when it comes to the environment.
3. The economy and the environment are in direct and vicious conflict.³⁴

Others take a different approach and shift the blame to the cross covered buildings and the many inside. A monumental manifesto was published in March of 1967 that turned the world of “concerned” Christendom upside down. Lynn White, Jr., in an article entitled, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” (printed in *Science*, Vol. 155, pp. 1203-1207, March 10, 1967; Copyright 1967 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science), traced the history of Western technology and science and the medieval view of man and nature and then gave Christianity an uppercut to her jaw, so severe that many Christians and Christian denominations changed their fighting style dramatically (along with their punches, i.e. messages).

White wrote:

The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture. It has become fashionable today to say that, for better or worse, we live in the ‘post-Christian age.’ Certainly, forms of our thinking and language have largely ceased to be Christian, but to my eye the substance often remains amazingly akin to that of the past. Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology. The fact that Communists share it merely helps to show what can be demonstrated on many other grounds: Marxism, like Islam, is a Judeo-Christian heresy. We continue today to live, as we have lived for about 1700 years, very largely in a context of Christian axioms.

Why?

³² Kepler, op. cit., p. 88.

³³ Piasecki, Bruce, and Asmus, Peter. *In Search of Environmental Excellence – Moving Beyond Blame*. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc. 1990. p. 48.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

While many of the world's mythologies provide stories of creation, Greco-Roman mythology was singularly incoherent in this respect. Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had had a beginning. Indeed, the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time. In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth, and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.

Especially, in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as 2nd century both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.... Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects ...

The Christian dogma of creation, which is found in the first clause of all the Creeds, has another meaning for our comprehension of today's ecologic crisis ... The dynamism of religious devotion, shaped by Judeo-Christian dogma of creation, gave it impetus.³⁵

Oh, the hew and cry that followed. First defensiveness. Then a rationale, "Let's understand how they could say that about us. Maybe we give that impression," response. Schaeffer addressed things and even pointed to some examples from Christianity by which she was judged:

An extreme example ... found in what the Dutch Christians call the Black Stocking Calvinists in Holland, who have a tradition that they may treat their animals cruelly because the animals do not have a soul and are not going to heaven. They would claim to be very, very orthodox – but actually they are not.... Theirs is Christianity in a perverted form. For as far as credalism is concerned, they are very strong, but they will actually beat and kick their animals, for the simple reason that the animals do not have souls or a heavenly destiny, thus are not worthy of kind treatment. This is a sub-Christian view concerning nature.³⁶

As one write put it, "Tragically – and arrogantly – we have distorted dominion into domination."³⁷ To outsiders looking in, appearance and perception were reality.

So, assuming a more, "we've got to do something" mode, the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches declared this issue a priority, "... ecological justice is an ethic of

³⁵ Schaeffer, op. cit., pp. 106-111.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁷ Sider, Ronald J., "Redeeming the Environmentalists," *Christianity Today*, June 21, 1993. p. 28.

the future which involves an obligation to clean up polluted natural systems and to shut down, as soon as practicable, energy systems which bequeath poison to future generations...”³⁸

“Whoa, Nellie!” Too far! With Scharleman we must concur:

The matter of “ecological justice did not suggest itself to Paul because he had a different set of priorities from that of the NCC. He was under divine compulsion to proclaim forgiveness of sins; and by the time he got all the way around from Jerusalem to Yugoslavia (Rom. 15:19) there was not too much time left for reflecting on “ecological justice,” especially after having suffered shipwreck three times, being adrift at sea for a night and a day, being stoned, lashed five times, and beaten with rods three times (see 2 Cor. 11:24-26).³⁹

While trees and turtles are not our brothers, the ones who see, appreciate and use them are. In consideration for our brothers, who are like sheep without a shepherd, who evoked Jesus’ gut-wrenching compassion, for whom Jesus said pray for reapers into the harvest, we must take this into consideration:

Across the last several decades, both fundamentalists and evangelicals have become identified as standing on the side of selfish exploiters of the resources of our planet. While not entirely accurate, it is the image with which we are painted. For some, this makes our gospel repulsive, which concerns me. I don’t want the gospel to be rejected for the wrong reason. After all, the gospel is our only hope for redeeming our world. The good news of what Jesus Christ has done and will do for us is the only power strong enough to transform us from selfish and wicked sinners into obedient and caring servants of God and our world.⁴⁰

V. The Delivery

The baby’s got to be delivered. But the mid-wife is not humanity. We can listen to AAL’s literature, and it’s good advice to “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.” Another suggested, “Reduce, reuse, recycle, resist and rejoice.”⁴¹ Symptoms might be dealt with, for a while. But the source of the problem is what needs addressing, before this world is undressed to her and our shame. C. S. Lewis touched on the delivery when he said, “Because we love something else more than this world we love even this world better than those who know no other.”⁴² And maybe this should go without saying, but that means we love not the world, nor the things in the world, first, as if we love God. Delivery does not come from deifying the earth.

Don’t think this is new either, this deifying the earth. Notice how many authors I quoted who capitalized Earth, and not just because they were naming our planet, distinguishing it from the others. Paul addressed this. “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of

³⁸ Scharleman, Martin, “Ecological Justice,” *Concordia Journal*, November 1978. pp. 242-243. 39.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kantzer, Kenneth S., “Silent No More,” *Christianity Today*, April 4, 1994; p. 33.

⁴¹ Wilkinsen, Loren, “There Is Nothing Christians Can Do,” *Christianity Today*, April 4, 1994. p.p. 31-32.

⁴² Martindale, Wayne, and, Root, Jerry, Editors, *The Quotable Lewis*, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, Publishers, Inc., 1963. p. 410.

immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and animals and reptiles ... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.” Romans 1:21-23, 25.

Worshipping the Earth, you betcha! It was not only all those cultures that saw “god” in creatures and made them anthropomorph-ed, wanting the qualities they had, and giving human qualities to them. It wasn’t only the Native Americans that made spirits connected with everything and everything connected with the spirit. Christians are throwing their hats in the ring too. Remember the upper cut they received?

So we read from Lutherans about the “real” delivery.

The base of our problem is that we have discarded the mystery of life and livingness. We have scientifically and technologically popped all the myths about who we are, where we’ve come from, how we stay alive, why we’re here and where we’re going. For example, until very recently we believed that the Earth belonged to God and that he alone held the secret of how life sustained itself, how the Earth renewed itself, and how things held together and worked. Man’s role was that of a steward, called to care for the Earth, nurture it, be governed by its inherent, inexplicable laws, and to stand in awe of its mysteries. Now, obviously, we can simply but scientifically explain any phenomenon we care to. I am not suggesting abandoning our scientific sophistication and returning to bygone fundamentalisms. But I am suggesting that, perhaps more than we are willing to accept, we have been sustained until now by the mystery about life ... In losing our myths, we also abandon the mysteries ... (no longer let us) deny our instinctual drive to live symbiotically with the Earth ...⁴³

Oh, it gets worse. There was a conference a number of years ago in which leaders attending the pre-conference called the earth, “Sacred Earth,” and sought a declaring of faith that, “The universe is sacred because all is one.” Then this “Christian” conference announced the need, “to evolve the earth ethics with a deeply spiritual orientation,” and suggested that the ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis resulting not from sin, but from ignorance.⁴⁴

Sheltered we are if that’s even the extent of the issue. Wilkinson reports: “many Christians find it difficult, in the religious pluralism of the environmental movement, to stand against such syncretism. The problem is made worse by the appearance, as Christian works, of books like Matthew Fox’s *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. That work dismisses as an Augustinian perversion any idea of original sin, welcomes the Earth itself as a kind of Christ, and dismisses as “Christofacism” any theology that speaks of the unique revelation of God in Jesus.”⁴⁵

You want it even worse? No, you say. Sorry, it is. 20 years ago, moved by the movement, James Lovelock, an atmospheric scientist and inventor put forth the basic concept of “Gaia.” Gaia was the Greek goddess of earth. “The Gaia hypothesis is the scientific expression of the pre-Christian belief that the Earth is a living creature.”⁴⁶

When Joel Gerlach was professor at our Seminary he once stated, “What’s in society will be in the church in seven years.” It didn’t take the Gaia lie that long to infiltrate. James Morton, dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, while eschewing the idea of Gaia

⁴³ Finhaber. op. cit., introduction.

⁴⁴ Wilkinson, Loren. “How Christian is the Green Agenda?”, *Christianity Today*, January 11, 1993. p. 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Connor, Tod. “Is the Earth Alive?” *Today*, January 11, 1993. pp. 23-25.

worship or praying to the goddess, he nevertheless believes that modern theology must reincorporate the Earth. He contrasts his contemporary theology with fundamentalist creationists who explicitly oppose evolution. Morton engaged a man named Paul Winter to compose a full-blown choral mass entitled “*Missa Gaia*” and had Lovelock, an avowed agnostic, preach a Sunday service.⁴⁷ Lovelock compared the Gaia appeal to that of the appeal of the Virgin Mary.

Things have gone so far with Gaia that:

... supporters of Gaia often argue against any special status for humanity among living creatures. Such a position is what has led PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) to destroy research laboratories and Earth First! to put metal spikes in trees (to thwart the chain saws of lumberjacks) ...The notion that human beings are intrinsically more valuable than a tree or a bug is now construed as a form of bigotry. Instead, all organisms are seen as vitally interrelated, and all plants and animals are said to have a right to survive.⁴⁸

So we’ve come full circle back to the “circle of life.” How many of our Christian parents rushed to the video store and purchased *The Lion King* and rented *Pocohantas*, not realizing that ‘religion’ is being promoted, and a healing for this sick earth, is touted as to have been found? We might want to give Mother Teresa three cheers for taking on Lovelock in 1988 at Oxford University’s Global Forum for survival. Mother Teresa said that if we take care of the people on the planet, the Earth will survive. Lovelock countered that if we take care of the Earth, humanity’s problems will be solved.⁴⁹ But it’s neither.

Delivery is from the Deliverer. “The best foundation for saving the creation is by worshipping and obeying the Creator revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁰ Even better stated, “The environmental problems with which we are faced are not because man had abandoned the creation, but because man has abandoned the Creator. The solution to these problems does not lie with man serving the creation but rather serving the Creator.”⁵¹ “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him,” Hebrews 11:6.

Solution is knowing God says, “... be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it ...” Genesis 1:28, and do so, by “... demolish(ing) arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ ...” 2 Corinthians 10:5. “For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth,” 2 Corinthians 13:8, because Jesus is, “... the way, the truth and the life ...” John 14:6. We are delivered, bought and purchased, set apart and made holy, and that’s how ‘cum, and that’s why. God’s glory is at stake, souls are at stake. Justified and sanctified, we are God’s people, and God’s people, listen to the groaning and don’t like it. They can only observe and trust what’s going on in God’s delivery room. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do,” Ephesians 2:8-10. Creatures of God respect God’s creation until they are delivered from it, and bid her adieu at her cremation.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sider, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵¹ Piel, op. cit., p. 6.

VI. Creation's Classroom

Years ago my wife and I got a puppy. It was the first year of our marriage and my vicar year. We named her Taffy Apple, not only because of my affinity to food items, but also because it was October, about this time of year, fall, harvest. She was a good dog. House trained well. A real companion, friend, and, with a bark bigger than her bite, a good watch dog and alarm for Kay on evenings when I was gone. Taffy moved with us to Casper, WY and moved with us through 4 of the 5 moves we made in city with rental situations the way they were. She was there when our Paul was born and liked him, maybe because he didn't pay her much attention. When Paul was little she was attacked one night by some horrendously big dog who ripped at her back. I remember her look of pain, almost like we with God, her "Why?" I answered in my mind, "It's my fault. Sin's in the world. You, created one, were hurt by it." Then when our Mandy was born, that little spitfire wanted to pull some Taffy, and Taffy didn't appreciate that much. She started nipping and snapping at our baby girl. It was time for Taffy to go, Mandy was a permanent fixture.

We placed an ad but no one seemed to want her. So I took her to the "Humane Society." There was her look again. Fear. Sorrow. Apprehension. Puzzlement. And I thought again, "She wouldn't be having to go through this, if ... if it weren't for sin." You think of when Rusty was hit by a car, or like when Momma cat left her kittens because you moved her when she was birthing them. And then the kittens died. – Someone has said, "Death preaches a powerful sermon," no matter what death you consider. Creation takes us into its classroom and teaches us about ourselves, but more importantly about our God.

Luther once said that if you wanted to learn to pray, look at your dog. With eyes so trusting, so persevering, they eat from their masters' tables. Luther also talked about a robin being his favorite preacher. When hiding as Junker Georg he would set a few breadcrumbs out on a window sill every morning. Daily a robin would come by and eat those crumbs, then fly to a nearby tree and sing its heart out to the Lord. No worry marks, no gray air. Lots of praise and thanks. And, as Jesus says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father ... So do not be afraid you are worth more than many sparrows," Matthew 10:29. And even of them its written, "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young ..." Psalm 84:3. Jesus would go on to say, "... Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them ... See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." Matthew 6:26, 28. Understand Jesus' lesson?

Speaking of Solomon, how about the inspired direction, "Go to the ant you sluggard consider its ways and be wise," Proverbs 6:6. I don't know if Lockyer has written a book, "All of the Animals of the Bible," but that would be interesting reading, to consider these creatures of God's creation and see a lesson for ourselves. Remember your adversary is like a roaring lion. How about talking that one out with your kids, while you're watching a nature segment, or even the *Wizard of Oz*. Satan's no coward. Pick up a copy of Keller's, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, when you're trying to understand yourself a bit (and read it side by side with Romans 6 and 7). Then, when you're having a hard time understanding and loving your sheep whom you serve and shepherd, read it again, because that's how Jesus was and is with you.

Peruse with me, Job 38 and 39. That's right, let's do a little Bible searching. How many references to God's direction and promises and providence and ... are found in references to His creatures? Using Luther's "Garland of Four Strands" approach to Bible Study, let's ask:

1. What is God telling me here? (comfort? command?)
2. What in the text makes me sad?
3. What in the text makes me glad?
4. What prayer petition does this text lead me to make?

And when you talk of heaven, do you tell your four year old Hans(es) what it will be like in terms like Luther's? June 19, 1530, "I know a lovely, pleasant garden, in which there are many children. They wear golden jackets and gather nice apples under the trees, and pears, and purple and yellow plums. They sing and run. They are happy and have pretty little ponies with golden reins and silver saddles. Therefore, dear little Hans, learn and pray cheerfully; then you will come together with your friends, into this lovely place."⁵² Remember Luther was at Coburg Castle, the Diet of Augsburg loomed before him. He had been sick at the Wartburg. And his father had just died. Too busy? Too moody? Too practical and unspiritual? Or was creation a good school for a teacher too?

VII. Take Care

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God," 1 Corinthians 10:31. "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful ..." 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. Stewardship. That's also taking care of God's creation. It's ours for a while, like all things, to be passed on to the next generation, to use for the glory of God, going with the Word, glorying in His grace, and glowing with our lights of Life and Salvation shining.

Piel encourages:

The phrase ... "Christian environmentalist" ... Actually, "Christian environmentalist" is a redundant phrase. The Christian is an environmentalist. The Christian is concerned about the environment but the concern centers on the attitudes of a responsible steward. The Christian environmentalist will become educated on the issues of greatest concern. In particular, the Christian environmentalist will become educated on the subject of "risk assessment" and avoid getting caught up in the modern hysteria ...⁵³

Be concerned. Even God was concerned about Nineveh. Spaude caught my attention when I was studying his *Peoples' Bible* commentary on Jonah. maybe it catches yours too:

Some have wondered why the Lord mentioned the "many cattle" in Nineveh. His concern and compassion extends to all his creatures, even to the animal world. Sparrows do not fall to the ground without his permission (Matthew 10:29). He provides for the needs of animals, birds and other creatures (Psalm 136:25; 147:9; Matthew 6:26,28) and he preserves them (Psalm 36:6).

⁵² Schroeder, Morton A. *Martin Luther. Man of God*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1983; p. 82.

⁵³ Peil. op. cit., p. 11.

Animals have no souls and cannot sin. Therefore, there was no reason to destroy the animals in Nineveh. Nor was there reason to destroy the people in Nineveh. Although they had sinned greatly they had repented and the Lord had forgiven their sin.⁵⁴

VIII. Conclusion

Waldo Werning in a work entitled *21st Century Christians With a First Century Faith*, 1988, p. 124, reminds us, “If we are blind and unresponsive to the world’s needs, we will pretend that the needy are not really hurting even though we see them bleed; if we see them alone, we will tell ourselves that they like it that way.” Translate that into environmental concerns. Blind we cannot be. Unresponsive? The same. It’s a relationship between your Savior and you, and then you with Him. It’s a relationship between you and your neighbor. These relationships happen while you are here. It’s love for Him and them. That love will endure long after we no longer need faith and hope. So, then, we love this place too, until then. Scripture on the issue of ecology is far deeper a matter than, “Paper or plastic?”

⁵⁴ Spaude, Cyril W. *Obadiah Jonah Micah, The People’s Bible*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1987; p. 88.

Appendix A

FOUR WINDS CIRCLE OF LEARNING

PRESENTS

**PLAINS INDIAN
DRUM WORKSHOP**

According to the Lakota People, the drum makes a sound because the spirit of the animal it is made of continues to live.

The drum is the voice of Wakan Tanka. The sound stirs us to understand the mystery and power in all things.

Through this workshop you will learn about the symbology of the drum and the respect the traditional Lakota People have for all living things.

Classes held monthly

For information and times call

Carmeen at 282 8573

Appendix B

*Oh great Spirit of the North,
we come to you and ask for the
strength and the power
to bear what is cold and harsh in life
We come like the buffalo
Ready to receive the winds that
truly can be overwhelming at times.
Whatever is cold and uncertain in our life,
we ask you to give us the strength to bear it.
Do not let the winter blow us away.
Oh Spirit of Life and Spirit of the North,
We ask you for strength and for warmth.*

*Oh Great Spirit of the East,
we turn to you where the sun comes up,
from where the power of light and refreshment come.
Everything that is born comes up in this direction—
the birth of babies, the birth of puppies,
the birth of ideas and the birth of friendship.
Let their be light,
Oh Spirit of the East,
Let the color of fresh rising in our life
Be glory to you.*

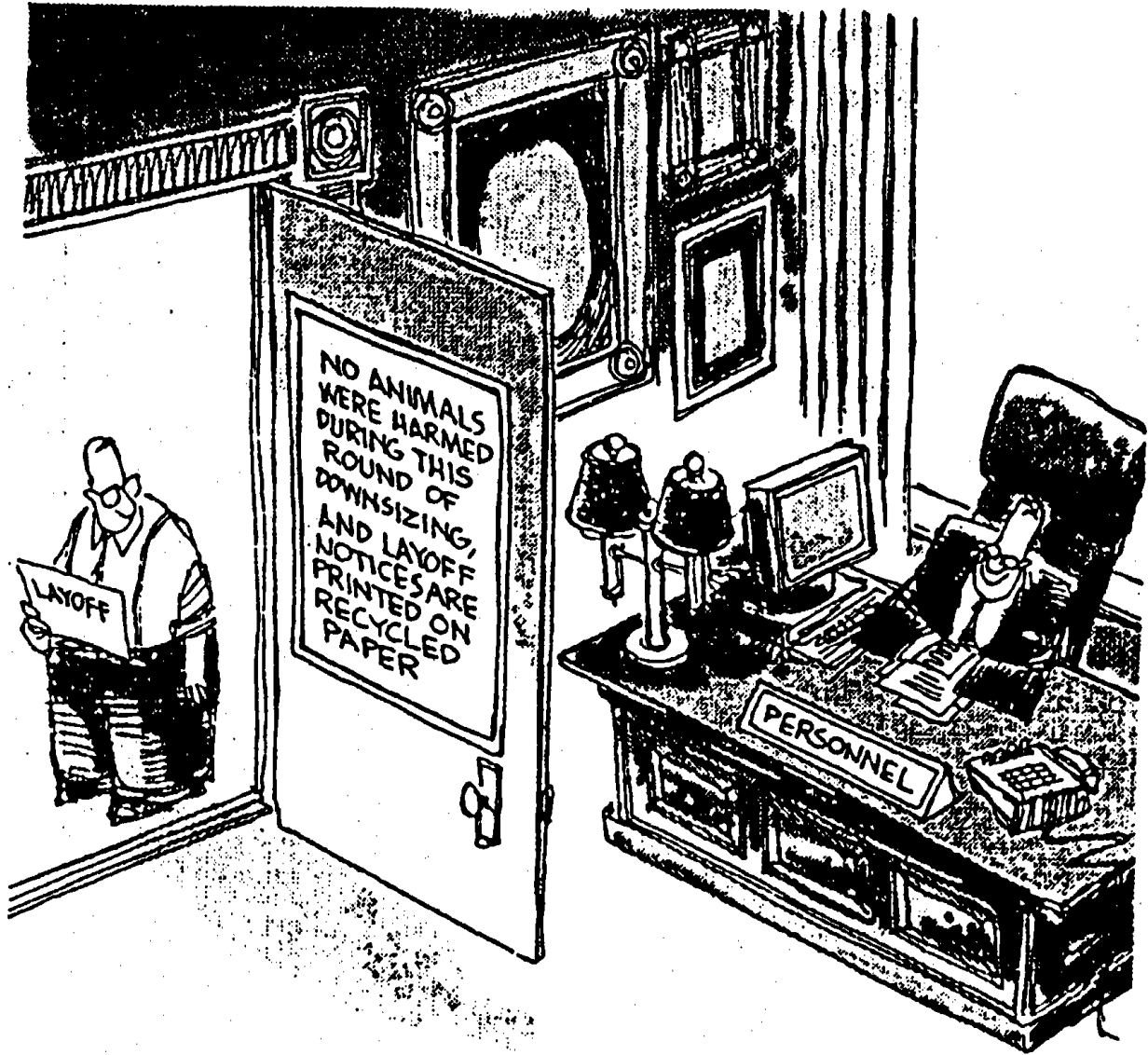
*Oh great Spirit of the South,
spirit of all that is warm and gentle and refreshing,
We ask you to give us this spirit of growth, of fertility, of gentleness.
Caress us with a cool breeze when the days are hot.
Give us seeds that flowers, trees and fruits
of the earth may grow.
Give us the warmth of good friendships.
Oh Spirit of the South,
send the warmth and the growth of your blessings.*

*Oh Great Spirit of the West,
where the sun goes down each day to come up the next,
we turn to you in praise of sunsets
and in thanksgiving for changes.
You are the great colored sunset of the red west
which illuminates us.
You are the powerful cycle which pulls us to transformation.
We ask for the blessings of the sunset.
Keep us open to life's changes.
Oh Spirit of the West,
when it is time for us to go into the earth,
do not desert us, but receive us in the arms of our loved ones.*

Diann Neuu

NON SEQUITUR

Wiley



CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM