Nature in the New Creation:
New Testament Eschatology and the Environment

Douglas J. Moo
Published in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006) 449-88

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1843, Ludwig Feuerbach claimed that, "Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul."[1] Feuerbach was not the first to accuse Christianity of an excessive anthropocentrism, and he was certainly not the last. Such charges have, indeed, become especially common during the last forty years, as many environmentalists trace to Christianity one of the ideological roots of the current "ecological crisis." Perhaps the best-known of these accusations came in a paper read by Lynn White, Jr., in 1967, entitled "The Historic Roots of our Ecological Crisis."[2] White argued that environmental degradation was the indirect product of Christianity, which he labeled (in its western form), "the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen."[3] The biblical claim that humans have dominion over creation has shaped the typically western "instrumentalist" view of nature: that the natural world exists solely to meet human needs.[4] Wedded to unprecedented scientific and technological advancements, Christian anthropocentrism has brought us pollution, global warming, and widespread species extinction. White himself did not call for a rejection of the Christian faith, but a modification along the lines suggested by the attitudes and practices of St. Francis of Assisi. But many environmentalists who followed the path blazed by White have not been as charitable. They view orthodox Christianity as a cultural virus that must be eradicated from the world if the planet is to survive. The "deep ecology" movement in particular insists that, along with the jettisoning of Christianity, true environmental healing can only take place when a new ideology is put in its place.[5] But just what ideology to put in the place of Christianity as a basis for environmental ethics is, of course, quite contested.[6] A significant number of contemporary environmentalists are convinced that some form of religion is needed to provide motivational power for the transformation of human attitudes toward the natural world. Max Oelschlaeger has claimed, "*There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative.*"[7] The ecological crisis has therefore been a powerful stimulus to the growth of various eastern and new-age religions, as well as the radical revisions of Christianity seen in, for instance, process theology and eco-feminist theology.[8]

Of course, many scholars are not at all convinced that White is correct about the degree to which Christianity is responsible for environmental degradation. Responses to White have faulted him for simplifying a far more complex historical and ideological development and for overstating the role of Christian theology in the formation of the modern western attitude toward nature.[9] To be sure, certain strands of Christian thinking have indeed fostered a dualistic anti-material tendency that has provided the impetus for an indifference toward nature. But the wholesale implication of Christian theology, let alone Scripture itself, in fostering such an indifference is an overstatement at best. As might be expected, orthodox Christians have been especially keen to register these reservations about White's thesis. As bookends to these responses, we may mention Francis Schaeffer's ground-breaking 1973 book *Pollution and the Death of Man,*[10] which was motivated to a considerable extent by White's essay; and Alistair McGrath's *The Reenchantment of Nature*, published in 2002.[11] But more important for my purpose than this continuing dispute about the ideological roots of the environmental crisis is the proliferation over the past half-century of books and articles seeking to discover in the Bible and in Christian theology resources to positively address this crisis. They are far too varied even to categorize here. It should be noted, however, that evangelicals have made significant contributions to this discussion,[12] and a number of significant evangelical organizations dedicated to environmental causes have arisen.[13] To be sure, evangelical reaction to environmentalism has been quite diverse. Some evangelicals have joined with social and political conservatives to voice concern about what they perceive to be evangelical environmentalists' overly negative attitude toward human ingenuity as manifested in technology and their tendency to ignore the role of individual human rights in social policy.[14] And it is fair to say that most lay evangelicals, responding to the anti-Christian attitudes displayed by many environmentalists and following the lead of some influential Christian media figures, have a generally negative attitude toward environmentalism.

From a different vantage point, biblical theologians have also been active in responding to the environmental crisis and to the accusations of tacit Christian theological complicity with it. OT theologians have been particularly active, and the last three decades have witnessed an avalanche of OT studies driven by environmental concerns.[15] However, what Paul Santmire in a 2003 article called a "revolution" in biblical-theological studies relating to the environment has hardly touched the NT. As Santmire says, "scholarly investigation of the theology of nature in the New Testament has not advanced the way it has in OT studies."[16] The situation is not surprising, for the NT certainly appears to offer far less material for a theology of nature than does the OT.[17] But the problem is not just one of lack of material: several interpreters locate the fissure between a theology embracive of nature and one indifferent or even hostile to it between the Old and New Testaments. In contrast to the typically ancient near eastern perspective on the

nature and destiny of humans as bound up with the land in which they live, which still shows through in the OT, the NT, it is alleged, under the influence of Greek dualistic notions, has separated humans from their environment. Thus, echoing and elaborating Feuerbach, it is argued that the NT is concerned with the salvation of the soul, while "this world" is viewed quite negatively. In this manner, the NT itself becomes the fountainhead of a contrast between spirit and matter that was carried out with a vengeance in Gnosticism and that has influenced generations of Christian theology and practice. And it is, of course, a short step from such a matter/spirit dichotomy to the instrumentalist view of nature that is often said to lie at the heart of our environmental crisis.[18]

The picture thus drawn of the NT is, of course, a caricature. But there is an element of truth in it. The NT is heavily anthropocentric; the "world" is often viewed negatively; little is said about the natural world; and what little is said sometimes suggests that it is doomed to an imminent fiery end. Many evangelicals are therefore seriously convinced that concern for the environment is either a waste of time – God will insure that the world will be preserved until its destined destruction – or a luxury we can't afford – we should deflect none of our time or resources from our core mission of evangelism. Let me say at the outset that I have no intention of suggesting that the redemption of human beings is not at the heart of God's plan or that the church should not make evangelism its primary goal. But I do want to suggest that the attitude of an "either/or" when it comes to evangelism and environmental concern is a false alternative, echoing the false alternative of evangelism versus social concern that was debated in the 60s and 70s, and is profoundly out of keeping with the witness of Scripture.

In this paper, specifically, I want to buttress this claim by suggesting, in a necessarily preliminary manner, that the NT stands in continuity with the OT in affirming the continuing importance of the natural world in the plan of God. To be sure, this point has been made, and made well, by others. But I hope to contribute to the discussion by the way I argue the point. First, I want to go a bit more deeply into the exegetical issues presented by the relevant texts than do many of the ecologically oriented NT expositions.

Second, and more important, I want to situate the relevant passages within a broader biblical-theological context. "Biblical theology" is a discipline that has been defined in many different ways since its "official" inception late in the eighteenth century. This is not the place to rehearse that history or to describe my own understanding of the discipline in any detail. But three facets of my own approach to biblical theology are important for this essay. First, I am convinced that biblical theology must both address the needs of the contemporary world and, in turn, be shaped by those concerns. This approach stands in some tension with the way in which biblical theology has often been conceived, both by evangelicals and non-evangelicals. Biblical theology, in contrast to systematic theology, has been defined as a purely historical and descriptive task. Biblical theologians study the Bible in its historical context, synthesizing its contents in terms of its own categories and thereby providing the raw material for the systematic theologian, who works with categories derived from traditional dogmatics and with one eye on the needs of the church. In the famous formulation of Krister Stendahl, biblical theology is said to be about what the Bible "meant"; it was for other disciplines to tell us what they "mean."[19] Postmodernism has, of course, cast serious doubt on this typically modernist bifurcation between pure historical description and contemporary application. No biblical theologian studies the Bible in a vacuum – as the relationship between various phases of biblical theology and the prevailing ideological climate of the time poignantly reveals. But the separation of what the Bible "meant" and what it "means" might be questioned at another level as well. Such a distinction, while appropriately recognizing the historical context of Scripture, fails at some level to recognize the performative dimension of Scripture. The words of the various human authors of the Bible are also the words of God who seeks through those words to stimulate worship of himself and to form the thinking and behavior of those people who claim to be his. A number of biblical theologians have recognized this problem and have accordingly, without sacrificing the historical dimension of biblical theology, suggested that the discipline must be undertaken in dialogue. Charles Scobie, for instance, usefully identifies biblical theology as a "bridge" discipline between exegesis of the biblical text on the one hand and systematic theology on the other – no new insight. But he then goes on to insist that the bridge must carry traffic in both directions.[20] Biblical theology does indeed provide material for the systematic theologian to work with; but biblical theology itself is necessarily and appropriately influenced by the concerns and results of systematic theology. To extend the analogy, I suggest that biblical theology may also function as a bridge between our modern world and the exegesis of Scripture. Insights into the contemporary condition of the world, derived from general observation or from careful scientific study are appropriately brought to bear on the formulation of biblical theology. In the case of our topic, then, the unprecedented global degradation of the environment we are currently witnessing urgently raises questions about our reading of the Bible – especially in light of the tendency we have noted above in some quarters to blame the Bible, or at least some interpretations of the Bible, for our ecological crisis.[21] Moreover, the perspective of our own culture may also legitimately become a lens through which we freshly read the Scriptures and formulate their message in terms of biblical theology. As Richard Bauckham argues, the environmental crisis has helped to free us from modernistic ideologies about nature. And so we can now "read the New Testament differently. We can recognize that, in continuity with the Old Testament tradition, it assumes that humans live in mutuality with the rest of God's creation, that salvation history and eschatology do not lift humans out of nature but heal precisely their distinctive relationship with the rest of nature."[22]

Of course, such a methodology carries with it inherent risks, and they must be explicitly acknowledged. They are well stated by Thomas Derr: "It is just that when the motive for the proposed adaptation is so clearly supplied from *outside* the tradition, I wonder whether the gospel is still speaking to the world, or if in effect the reverse has not happened, and the world is requiring conformity from the gospel."[23] It would be terribly easy simply to replace one ideologically driven reading with another; to replace a neglect of the creation theme in Scripture with an equally unbalanced interpretation that reads into the text a modern ecological perspective. The answer to the problem, however, is not to retreat to a concept of a "pure" biblical theology, unsullied by contemporary agendas or perspectives – as if such a retreat were possible! The answer, rather, is to acknowledge our perspective and, especially, to enter into creative dialogue with the text whereby it is given the power to question the correctness of our initial perspective. The text must indeed have the final word, as we seek to discover the best ultimate "fit" between our biblical theological construals and the Bible itself.

I have already touched on a second dimension of biblical theology that is central to our task: its canonical shape. Interpretations that drive a wedge between the OT and the NT on the issue of the natural world fail to take seriously the unity of Scripture. A
biblical-theological approach as I understand it will seek to discover ways in which the NT carries on the teaching about the created world that is so important in the OT. It will actively and unabashedly seek to interpret the text of the NT in a way that brings it into harmony with the Old.

Third, our biblical-theological approach to the issue under discussion will set texts in the context of certain specific broader themes that bind the Scriptures together. Two are especially important for the present essay. First, we will utilize the common perspective of inaugurated eschatology, with its critical distinction between the "already" of fulfillment and the "not yet" of consummation. My colleague Greg Beale and others have put forth the notion of "new creation" as at least one central unifying theme within this structure of eschatological realization.[24] Quite appropriately, granted the NT focus, most studies of "new creation" have focused on its anthropological aspects. I want to explore the place of creation itself in this eschatological program of new creation. Second, the theological and eschatological significance of the texts we are looking at can only be appreciated after they are set within the larger biblical story line. A brief and admittedly simplistic rehearsal of this story, with a focus on those stages of particularly significance to our study, runs as follows. The first humans, created in God's image, failed to obey the Lord their God and brought ruin on themselves and the entire world. After the judgment of expulsion from the Garden and the Flood, God began his work of reclaiming his fallen creation through Abraham and his descendants. From that line came Israel, the nation God chose to carry forward his grand plan of redemption. The nation was given the responsibility not only to worship God through their praise and obedience but also to be a "light to the nations": to be the means of God's blessing of the entire world. As both means both of blessing and testing, Israel was given a land. Israel's enjoyment of that land, indeed, her continuance in it, depends on her obedience to the covenant stipulations. Yet Israel fails on this score; and so the nation is sent into exile, removed from its land. But the prophets proclaim that the exile will one day be reversed. Central to many of the prophetic texts is this theme of return from exile, when God would bless his people anew, the land would once again be fruitful, and the ultimate purpose of God to bless the nations through Israel would be accomplished.[25] Israel did, of course, return from exile, but it quickly became clear that this return falls far short of what the prophets had promised. And so a new deliverance was still anticipated. The NT claims that this deliverance has taken place in and through the coming of Jesus the Messiah. He, the second Adam, the true and ultimate image of God, obeys where Adam had disobeyed and through his death and resurrection inaugurates the last days that the prophets had longed for. The true "return from exile" has finally taken place. Yet, as we have already noted, the ultimate benefits of that fulfillment are not yet seen. Through Christ's second coming God will consummate his redemptive work for the entire cosmos.[26]

This very rough sketch of the shape of eschatological fulfillment as it unfolds in the biblical story brings nothing new to the table. But insufficient attention has been paid to the place of the cosmos in this scheme of fulfillment. Return to the land and the blessing of the land were very important in the prophetic witness.[27] What happens to that theme in the NT? Any adequate answer to this question involves us in some very knotty and controversial hermeneutical issues. Some interpreters insist that the OT promises about a return to the land have not been fulfilled in the return from exile and must be fulfilled when Christ returns in glory. While this position deserves respect for the seriousness with which it takes the OT promises, I am not convinced finally that it does justice to what we might call the "universalizing" hermeneutic of the NT.[28] Other scholars insist that the NT pattern of fulfillment points to Christ and his people as the "place" where the OT land promises now find their fulfillment. As W. D. Davies puts it, "In sum, for the holiness of space, Christianity has fundamentally, though not consistently, substituted the holiness of a Person; it has Christified holy space."[29] The Christological focus in the NT presentation of fulfillment of the promise is certainly justified. But I think there are suggestions within the NT that the land promise has not simply been spiritualized or "Christified," but universalized. [30] In a necessarily tentative fashion, therefore, I will suggest that the land promise in the NT is expanded, in a manner typical of the shape of NT fulfillment, to include the whole world. Furthermore, I

want to suggest that this restoration of "the world" is not to be spiritualized, nor can it be reduced to human beings only. It includes a material element. God is at work bringing blessing not only to his people but to the physical cosmos itself.

Before pursuing this argument, I must make one more brief preliminary point, having to do with my choice to use the word "nature." Many authors have noted that the concept denoted by this word is quite ambiguous: what people mean by "nature" is socially constructed.[31] Commenting on this fact, Alistair McGrath calls for the development of a new ontology of nature, rooted in the biblical doctrine of creation.[32] Jürgen Moltmann expresses a similar concern:

> For centuries, men and women have tried to understand God's creation as nature, so that they can exploit it in accordance with the laws science has discovered. Today the essential point is to understand this knowable, controllable and usable nature as God's creation, and to learn to respect it as such. The limited sphere of reality which we call 'nature' must be lifted into the totality of being which is termed 'God's creation.'[33]

If in this essay I use the word "nature" rather than "creation," it is not because I disagree with McGrath and Moltmann: indeed, this essay is a very minor contribution to their program. Rather I use the word "nature" because it more naturally denotes the sub-human world of creation that is the focus of this essay.

The essay falls into three parts. I first look at several passages on the future of the created world. I will then turn to passages and concepts about the present state of the created world. I will conclude with some reflections on the ethical implications of the NT eschatological perspective.

II. THE FINAL STATE OF NATURE: THE "NOT YET" OF ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT

1. *Romans 8:19-22*

Romans 8:19-22, along with Col 1:20, is the NT text most often cited in literature on biblical environmentalism. And justly so. It is the clearest expression of future hope for the physical world in the NT. The texts comes toward the beginning of a section in which Paul celebrates the future glory that God's work in Christ assures to believers. The verses immediately ground (γάρ) v. 18: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."[34] How they ground v. 18 depends on the most important exegetical issue raised by this text: the referent of "creation" (κτίσις; occurring once in each verse). Interpreters have argued that the word must include, as it allegedly usually does in Paul, the entire created universe.[35] Others, noting the fact that this creation is said to be "waiting in eager expectation" (v. 19) and "groaning" (v. 22), argue that the reference must be to human beings, perhaps especially unbelievers.[36] However, the transition from v. 22 to v. 23 excludes believers from the scope of "creation" in vv. 19-22; and Paul's insistence in v. 20 that the "frustration" to which this creation was subjected occurred without its own choice excludes human beings in general. With the majority of modern interpreters, then, I take it that "creation" in these verses refers to the "sub-human" creation.[37] Following the lead of psalmists and prophets (e.g., Ps 65:12-13; Isa 24:4; Jer 4:28; 12:4), Paul personifies the world of nature in order to portray its "fall" and anticipated glory.

Three of the things Paul says about creation in these verses are especially important for our argument.

First, creation has been "frustrated" and is in "bondage to decay." In the background is the curse of the ground in Gen 3:17-19:

> To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Allusion to the Fall story leads some interpreters to identify "the one who subjected it" with Adam and then to apply the language directly to environmental degradation at the present time: humans bring decay to creation by their sinful and selfish "subduing" of it.[38] But this is most unlikely; the "one who subjected it" must surely be God, who pronounces the curse. The exact nature of this curse and its effect on the earth are difficult to pin down. My colleague Henri Blocher, warning about speculating beyond the evidence, suggests that the text above all focuses on the relationship of nature to human beings.[39] Human "dominion" over the earth becomes, as a result of sin, a difficult thing to achieve; the earth will not readily yield its plenty to human beings. And certainly the praise of creation in the OT, Paul's argument that the created world continues to reveal truth about God (Rom 1:19-22), and his assertion that "everything God created is good" (1 Tim 4:4) warn us against too strong an interpretation of this "curse." But, at the same time, the language of the text before us suggests that human sin led to some kind of change in the nature of the cosmos itself. It has been subject, Paul says, to "frustration," or "vanity"; the Greek word suggests that creation has been able to attain the purpose for which it was created. The "bondage to decay [φθορά]" is also difficult to interpret, but Paul is probably attributing to the created world the inevitable destruction that the Greeks attributed to all created things.[40] And Paul's use of this same language in 1 Cor 15:42 and 50 to contrast the "perishable" body of this life and the "imperishable" body of the life to come points in the same direction. "Decay" suggests the inevitable disintegration to which all things since the Fall are subject.[41]

Our conclusions about the nature of the created world as a result of the Fall are therefore necessarily modest. What can be affirmed on the basis of Romans 8 is that the natural world itself has been affected in some way by the human fall into sin and is therefore no longer in its pristine created state. This element in the teaching of Romans 8 has important consequences for a properly Christian view of the natural world. Human sin has affected the state of nature itself and will continue to do so until the end of this age. As Moltmann notes, "To understand 'nature' as creation therefore means discerning 'nature' as the enslaved creation that hopes for liberty. So by 'nature' we can only mean a single act in the great drama of the creation of the world on the way to the kingdom of glory -- the act that is being played out at the present time."[42]

And this brings us to our second and third points, which we can make more quickly. If creation has suffered the consequences of human sin, it will also enjoy the fruits of human deliverance. When believers are glorified, creation's "bondage to decay" will be ended, and it will participate in the "freedom that belongs to the glory"[43] for which Christians are destined. Nature, Paul affirms, has a future within the plan of God. It is destined not simply for destruction but for transformation. To be sure, this transformation is tightly bound to the future of God's own people; and the rest of Romans 8 focuses on the future of believers.[44] These circumstances have led some interpreters to view the references to creation in vv. 19-22 as remnants of apocalyptic imagery that Paul uses solely to foster belief in the hope of human transformation.[45] Certainly, Paul uses vv. 19-22 – to come back finally to our initial question – to explain the need for and nature of the "glory that will be revealed in us." However, without in the slightest taking away from the anthropological focus of Romans 8, vv. 19-22 must be allowed to make their own point. The reversal of the conditions of the Fall includes the created world along with the world of human beings. Indeed, the glory that humans will experience, involving as it does the resurrection of the body (8:9-11, 23), necessarily requires an appropriate environment for that embodiment.[46]

Finally, we should note that, in addition to Genesis 3, these verses in Romans almost certainly allude to various prophetic expectations. Silvia Keesmaat has noted that Paul's language in vv. 18-25 reflects traditions about the exodus, which often provides the backdrop in Isaiah for the prediction of a new creation.[47] But the single most important prophetic text echoed in these verses is Isaiah 24-27. Isaiah 24:1-13 describes the effects of sin in cosmic terms: "the heavens languish with the earth" (v. 4) "a curse consumes the earth" (v. 6). And why is the earth in this condition? Because "the earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant" (v. 5).[48] Isaiah goes on in these chapters to describe how that situation will be reversed. As Jonathan Moo has summarized the matter, the prophet looks

> to a time when the Lord will reign as king on Mount Zion (24:23) and the glory of the Lord (δόξα κυρίου) will be praised (24:14, 15) and manifested (25:1). On that day, the Lord will destroy "the covering that is cast on all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth" (25:7-8). This is the day that God's people have waited and yearned for as they have sought him in their distress (25:9, 26:8,9, 26:16). Indeed, they have been suffering as in birth pains (ωδίνω) but they have not been able to bring about deliverance in the earth (26:17-18). But despite their seemingly fruitless labor, "the dead shall live, their bodies shall rise" and the "dwellers in the dust awake" (26:19) and, in the days to come, "Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit" (27:6).[49]

Paul quotes from this section of Isaiah later in Romans (Isa 27:9 in 11:27), and other NT authors make extensive use of the imagery of these chapters. Paul's dependence on this section of Isaiah's prophecy in Romans 8 suggests that his conviction about the physical restoration of the entire world is to some extent derived from the prophetic hope for the restoration of Israel to her land – a restoration that in these chapters, and in a manner typical of Isaiah's prophecy, ultimately encompasses the whole world (see esp. 24:21-23; 27:6, 13). Moreover, this same idea may surface elsewhere in Romans. In Rom 4:13, Paul speaks of the promise to Abraham that he would be the "heir of the world." Genesis, of course, while emphasizing the world-wide extent of the blessing associated with Abraham, teaches that he would be heir of one particular land, Palestine. Paul clearly universalizes: but in what direction? Does the "world" (κόσμος) here refer to human beings only? One might conclude so, since Paul's concern in this context is with the inclusion of Gentiles along with Jews as recipients of the promise to Abraham.[50] However, while human beings are undoubtedly the focus, the concern Paul shows for the physical earth in Romans 8 suggests that "world" in Rom 4:13 may well include the earth also.[51]

2. *New Heavens and New Earth*

The hope for the liberation of creation that Paul expresses in Romans 8 clearly implies that the destiny of the natural world is not destruction but transformation. But this hope for a transformed world stands in some tension with passages in the NT which appear to announce that the last days will usher in an entirely new world. The most important of these passages are those in 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 that predict the "destruction" (2 Pet 3:10, 11, 12) or "passing away" (Rev 21:1) of the present heavens and earth as the prelude to the appearance of a "new heaven and a new earth."[52] The continuity between this world and the next one is difficult to determine. But this much can at least be said:

the new world is a place of material substance. The phrase "heaven and earth" is a merism that refers to the entire universe.[53] As Greg Beale points out, therefore, Rev 21:1 predicts "not merely ethical renovation but transformation of the fundamental cosmic structure (including physical elements)."[54] This language warns us against the persistent tendency in Christian tradition to picture the saints' eternal home as an ethereal and immaterial place up above somewhere.[55] In fact, the NT, contrary to popular Christian parlance, does not usually claim that we will spend eternity in heaven, but in a new heaven and a new earth: a material place suited for life in a material, though of course transformed, body.[56] Jesus' Resurrection signals God's commitment to the material world.[57] But the immediate question we need to answer is this: How are we to resolve the tension between the expectation that this world will be transformed and the expectation that this world will be destroyed and exchanged for a new one?

The interpretation of both passages is complicated by their apocalyptic style, a style that features metaphoric language notoriously difficult to interpret. What are we to make of John's vision of the existing heaven and earth "passing away" or of his assertion that, at the time of the great white throne judgment, the "earth and the heavens fled from his [God's] presence, and there was no place for them" (Rev 20:11)? What does Peter mean when he predicts the "destruction of the heavens by fire" (v. 12) or that "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done it will be laid bare" (v. 10) or that "the elements will melt in the heat" (v. 12)? Are we to take this language as straightforward descriptions of a future physical reality, to be fulfilled perhaps in a nuclear holocaust or in the ultimate fiery explosion of the sun?[58] Or are John and Peter using metaphors to depict an irruption of God's power to remake the world as we know it?

A close look at the passages suggests that what is envisaged is not annihilation and new creation but radical transformation.

We should begin with the ultimate source of the new heaven and new earth language: Isa 65:17 and 66:22-24.[59] John's vision of the New Jerusalem, which he uses to elaborate the nature of the new heaven and new earth, depends considerably on the language of these last chapters in Isaiah (as well, of course, as others in Isaiah and the prophets). Interpreters of Isaiah generally agree that these prophecies have in view the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises to his people Israel. But they disagree considerably over the degree of direct referentiality in Isaiah's language. Is the prophet describing rather straightforwardly the conditions of the new world, as they will exist in the millennium or in the eternal state? Or is he using language drawn from this world to describe in a series of metaphors an experience that simply has no direct analog to our experience in this world? In either case, the nature of the continuity between this world and the one to come is not clear from Isaiah.

Jewish interpretations of the new heaven and new earth language do not help to resolve the issue either. Both the idea of a renovation of this world and the replacement of this world with a different one are found in the literature.[60]

The language of Rev 20:11 and 21:1 could certainly suggest that a new heaven and new earth replaces the old.[61] But neither text is completely clear about the matter. Grant Osborne, for instance, takes the language about heaven and earth "fleeing" from God's presence in 20:11 to refer to a destruction of the universe.[62] But David Aune thinks it is a theophanic metaphor and has no reference to destruction.[63] He does, however, think, that "no place being found" for the heaven and the earth in 20:11 suggests physical destruction.[64] However, the language could refer to judgment rather than to destruction.[65] Similarly, while the "passing away" language of 21:1 could suggest the destruction of the physical universe, it could also suggest that it is the sinful "form" of this world which is to pass away rather than the world itself.[66] And there are other pointers in this context to the idea of renovation. In Rev 21:5, God proclaims, "I am making everything new!" He does not proclaim "I am making new things." The language here suggests renewal, not destruction and recreation.[67] The language of Revelation 21-22 is full of references to the original creation, suggesting that John intends to portray "the reverse of the curse," a return to the conditions of Eden (though the end advances beyond the conditions of Eden in significant ways as well).

Similar points can be made when we turn to 2 Peter 3. It should be noted at the outset that some environmentally oriented studies of the NT fail to take the passage seriously enough.[68] Scholars in general often dismiss the text from serious theological consideration because Peter is alleged to have picked up his notion of a "world conflagration" from the Stoics. But the differences between the Stoic conception of a cyclical destruction and recreation of the world and Peter's biblically oriented linear conception make such dependence unlikely.[69] The background is much more likely to be the OT, which regularly uses "fire" as an image of judgment.[70] Several interpreters therefore conclude that Peter is using standard metaphors to refer to God's final judgment on human beings.[71] There is some truth in this observation, since Peter parallels the destruction of this present world to the destruction of the former world through the Flood of Noah's day. Clearly the Flood brought judgment upon humankind; equally clearly, the Flood did not annihilate the earth. Yet we cannot finally eliminate some notion of a far-reaching change in the very universe itself. As we have already noted, "heaven and earth" quite regularly in Scripture refers to the created universe, not simply to the human world; and Peter's reference to the "elements" (vv. 10 and 12), while much debated, probably also refers to the components of the physical world. Moreover, the whole argument in this part of 2 Peter 3 is cosmological in focus. Mockers deny that Christ will ever return in judgment because, they claim, "everything" goes on as it has since creation (v. 4).[72] Peter responds by reminding the mockers of three outstanding interventions of God in the cosmos: creation

itself, the flood in the day of Noah, and the end of history as we know it.[73] But three points warn us about concluding too hastily that the end of history will involve destruction of the present universe.

First, we should note that the translation of v. 10 in some versions (e.g., KJV; ASV; NASB), which has "the earth and everything in it" being "burned up," is almost certainly incorrect. The text is notoriously difficult, but almost all modern versions and commentators assume that the reading "will be found" (εὑρεθήσεται) is original. What it means is more difficult to determine, but perhaps the idea of being "laid bare" before God for judgment is the best option.[74]

Second, the language of burning and melting that is found in vv. 7, 10, and 12 must be read against the background of the OT, where the language is often a metaphorical way of speaking of judgment.[75] And even if some reference to physical fire is present, the fire need not bring total destruction.

And that brings us to our third, and most important point: the Greek word for "destroy" in vv. 10, 11, and 12 is λύω, a verb that denotes, as Louw-Nida put it, "to destroy or reduce something to ruin by tearing down or breaking to pieces."[76] While semantically distinct from the more common words for "destroy" or "destruction" in the NT (ἀπόλλυμι and ἀπώλεια), therefore, it is similar in meaning. "Destruction" does not necessarily mean total physical annihilation, but a dissolution or radical change in nature.[77] The widespread metaphorical sense of the venerable English verb "undo" might accurately convey something of the sense. When a character in a C. S. Lewis novel exclaims that he is "undone," he does not mean that he has ceased to exist but that the very nature of his being has been destroyed. We should also note that language of "destruction" is frequently used in the NT to refer to the ultimate fate of sinful human beings. Most scholars correctly resist the conclusion that this language points to the doctrine of annihilationism. Therefore, just as the "destruction of the ungodly" in v. 7 need not mean the annihilation of these sinners, neither need the "destruction" of the universe in vv. 10-12 mean that it is annihilated. The parallel with what God did when he "destroyed" the first world in the Flood of Noah suggests that God will "destroy" this world not by annihilating it but by radically transforming it into a place fit for resurrected saints to live in forever.[78]

We must not minimize the strength of the language in Revelation 20-21 and 2 Peter 3: both texts indicate a radical and thoroughgoing renovation of the world as we now know it. But I do not think the texts require us to believe that this world will be destroyed and replaced. And, as we have pointed out all along, two other considerations point strongly to the idea of renovation rather than replacement. First is the teaching of Romans 8 about the liberation of the cosmos. Second is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which demands a significant continuity of some kind between this world and the next. In fact, the analogy of the human body, as many interpreters have suggested, may offer the best way to resolve the tension between destruction and transformation with respect to the universe. Here also we find a puzzling combination of continuity and discontinuity. Jesus' resurrection body is able, apparently, to dematerialize and materialize again; it is not always recognizable; it is, as Paul puts in with respect to the resurrection body in general, a new kind of body, suited for existence in the spirit-dominated eternal kingdom (1 Cor 15:35-54). Yet there is continuity in the body: in some sense, the body that was in the grave is the same as the body that appears to the disciples after the resurrection. This "transformation within continuity," as Colin Gunton puts it, furnishes an apt parallel to the future of the cosmos.[79] Perhaps the word "renewal" best captures this combination of continuity and discontinuity.

III. THE PRESENT STATE OF NATURE: THE "ALREADY" OF ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT

1. *Colossians 1:20*

If Rom 8:19-22 is the most frequently cited "environmental" text on the "not yet" side of the eschatological tension, Col 1:20 certainly deserves the honor on the "already" side of the tension. Verses 19-20 read, in the TNIV: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Ray van Leeuwen aptly states a typical claim made for this verse in biblical-theological studies of the environment: "All of reality is Christ's good creation, all of reality is redeemed by him; therefore, all of reality is the responsibility of God's people."[80] Yet those who make such claims rarely acknowledge the complex and debated interpretational issues surrounding Col 1:20.[81] It can hardly be cited in support of any view without at least supportive argumentation.

Determining the meaning of the text is complicated by the fact that the verse is the conclusion of what is generally thought to be an early christological "hymn" (vv. 15-20) that Paul has quoted to buttress his argument against false teachers in the church at Colossae. Interpreters debate the original form of the hymn, what its original theology may have been, and how Paul is using it in his argument.[82] We must bypass most of this discussion here. But one matter must at least be mentioned. Many interpreters argue that the author of Colossians has redacted the original hymn in an ecclessio-centric direction. The most notable evidence of such a redactional *tendenz* is the phrase τῆς ἐκκλησίας in v. 18, which, it is alleged, the author has added to shift the referent of τοῦ σώματος from the cosmos to the church. The author does something similar, then, in v. 20, implicitly redirecting the universal reconciliation of the original hymn to the reconciliation of human beings with God in the church in vv. 21-23. And there is good lexical basis for such a limitation: Paul elsewhere confines reconciliation language to the new relationship offered to humans through the

sacrifice of Christ.[83] Thus even interpreters who doubt that we can distinguish between the intent of the hymn and Paul's application sometimes argue that the reconciliation of v. 20 must be limited in scope. I. H. Marshall, for instance, claims that "reconcile" can only apply to parties who are capable of responding to the invitation to be reconciled and that the word must therefore be limited to human beings. With others, he argues that the point of v. 20 is not the extent of reconciliation but the unique status of Jesus as the one through whom reconciliation takes place.[84] Two responses to this limitation of the scope of reconciliation need to be made. First, the attempt to penetrate behind our present text to determine the original shape and theology of the hymn is problematic because we simply do not have the kind of data we would need to draw sustainable conclusions.[85] Second, the attempt to limit the scope of reconciliation in v. 20 fails to reckon seriously with the intent of vv. 15-20. The word πάντα ("all things") in v. 20 occurs five other times in the immediate context, and in each case its referent is to all the created universe.[86] The scope of the word is especially clear from the reference to "things on earth or things in heaven" in v. 20. As v. 16 reveals, "things in heaven" includes (though it is not necessarily limited to) the spiritual beings that play so prominent a role in the background of the Colossian controversy (cf. 2:10, 14-15; and perhaps the στοιχεια of 2:8 and 20). The context therefore requires that πάντα be unlimited in its scope. In vv. 21-23, then, Paul does not limit the referent of v. 20 but emphasizes the application of the general "reconciliation" of v. 20 to the Colossian Christians.[87]

If, however, v. 20 does indeed claim that the entire created universe has been reconciled to God in Christ, what is the nature of that reconciliation? Since at least the time of Origen, some interpreters have used this verse to argue for universal salvation: in the end, God will not (and often, it is suggested, *can*not) allow anything to fall outside the scope of his saving love in Christ. Universal salvation is a doctrine very congenial to our age, and it is not therefore surprising that this verse, along with several others in Paul, are regularly cited to argue for this belief.[88] This is not the place to refute this doctrine, which, we briefly note, cannot be reconciled with clear NT teaching about the reality and eternality of Hell.[89] But particularly relevant to the meaning of v. 20 is Paul's teaching in 2:15 that God, "having disarmed the powers and authorities, . . . made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."[90] The spiritual beings to which Paul refers explicitly in v. 20 are not saved by Christ but vanquished by him. Therefore in order to do justice to both 1) the universal scope of "all things"; and 2) the explicit limitation on the scope of God's saving work in Christ both in Colossians and in the rest of the NT, "reconcile" in v. 20 must mean something like "pacify."[91] Through the work of Christ on the cross, God has brought his entire rebellious creation back under the rule of his sovereign power. It is because of this work of universal pacification that God will one day indeed be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28) and that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

What Col 1:20 teaches, then, is not "cosmic salvation" or even "cosmic redemption," but "cosmic restoration" or "renewal."[92] Again, Paul is indebted to a broad OT theme for his teaching here. The participle ειρηνοποιήσας ("making peace") that elaborates the concept of reconciliation in v. 20 reflects the widespread OT prediction that in the last day God would establish universal *shalōm,* "peace," or "well-being."[93] The OT prophets focus, naturally enough, on the way this "peace" would bring security and blessing to Israel as the people live in the land God gave them. In a manner typical of NT fulfillment, Paul proclaims that this peace has now been established in Christ and enables God's new covenant people to live in a still dangerous and hostile world with new confidence and freedom from anxiety. They need not fear the spiritual powers that were believed in Paul's day to be so determinative of one's destiny.[94] Of course, this "peace" is not yet fully established. The "already/not yet" pattern of NT eschatology must be applied to Col. 1:20. While secured in principle by Christ's crucifixion and available in preliminary form to believers, universal peace is not yet established.

We may now, finally, ask about the role of the natural world in this universal peace. Two points suggest that, while clearly not dominant in Paul's argument here, a restoration of the natural world is included. First, to reiterate a point made earlier, vv. 15-20 explicitly emphasize the cosmic dimension of Christ's lordship. If the natural world is included in the scope of the "all things" that Christ rules as mediator of creation, it must also be included in the scope of the "all things" that he rules as mediator of reconciliation. Second, Rom 8:19-22 demonstrates that the world of nature has in some manner been effected by the Fall and is, therefore, in need of restoration. At the minimum, therefore, Col 1:20 confirms our findings from Rom 8:19-22 and projects them into the present: the eschatological fulfillment of God's promises continues, according to the NT witness, to include the "land," expanded to the entire cosmos; and that program of fulfillment has been inaugurated already. But what will this "reconciliation" look like? With humans, as we have seen, reconciliation involves especially a restored relationship with God. With evil spiritual beings, on the other hand, it involves subjugation. What is involved is a restoration (with eschatological intensification) of the original conditions of God's first creation. God's people will be brought back into a relation of harmony with their creator; evil will be judged and banished; the earth itself will be "liberated from its bondage to decay."[95] Furthermore, while the "vertical" dimension of reconciliation is clearly to the fore in v. 20 – God has reconciled all things "to himself" – a horizontal aspect is probably included as well.[96] This is because the pacification of spiritual beings has specific implications for Christians' relationship to them: because God has subjugated them to himself, they have been "disarmed" and no longer have the power to determine the destiny of God's people. Therefore, we might suggest that the reconciliation secured

by Christ means that nature is "already" restored in principle to that condition in which it can fulfill the purpose for which God created it and thereby praise its Creator (cf. Rev 5:13). At the same time, reconciliation may also imply that Christians, renewed in the image of God (see below), are both themselves brought into harmony with creation and, in light of the "not yet" side of reconciliation, are to work toward the goal of creation's final transformation.

2. *"New Creation"*

The title of this paper suggests that the concept of "new creation" would have been the natural place to begin this paper. In fact, I have left it until now because it is best approached only after some of the other matters we have considered are in place. The language of "new creation" as such occurs only twice in the NT, both times in Paul:

> 2 Cor 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: The old has gone, the new has come!"
>
> Gal 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."

Both occurrences are usually given a strictly anthropological reference: it is the Christian transformed by God's grace who is the "new creation" or "new creature."[97] Context would appear to support this interpretation, since in both passages Paul is drawing out the implications of the new realm of grace for believers. Galatians 6:15 is a final decisive reminder that God in Christ has inaugurated a radically new era in which the old covenant markers of identity are simply no longer relevant. And it is the reconciliation of the world of human beings that Paul seems to have in mind in 2 Corinthians (see v. 19).[98] Moreover, the logic of 2 Cor 5:17 would also seem to limit the reference to human beings, since the existence of the "new creation" appears to hinge on a person's belonging to Christ. However, there are also indications that, while *applied* to the new state of believers, the "new creation" language *refers to* the entire new state of affairs that Christ's coming has inaugurated.

First, the abruptness with which Paul introduces the new creation in 2 Cor 5:17 renders uncertain the precise logical connection in the verse. Many English versions follow the pattern found, for instance, in ESV: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." But perhaps the abruptness of the construction favors a rendering such as is found in the TNIV (quoted above), or even "if anyone is in Christ, they belong to a new creation." Roughly the same situation obtains in Gal 6:15, where "new creation" is again used absolutely. Second, it is worth noting that most modern versions have chosen the translation "creation" rather than "creature" in both passages – a move justified, as noted earlier, by the general use of the word κτίσις in the NT.[99] Third, while the phrase "new creation" is not found in the OT, it is generally agreed that Paul's phrase refers to the hope of a world-wide, even cosmic, renewal that is so widespread in the last part of Isaiah. In chaps. 40-55, Isaiah often portrays the return of Israel from exile in creation language. [100] Especially important, because of its linguistic connections with 2 Cor 5:17, is Isa 43:18-21:

> Forget the former things;
> do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!
> Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
> I am making a way in the desert
> and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor me,
> the jackals and the owls,
> because I provide water in the desert
> and streams in the wasteland,
> to give drink to my people, my chosen,
> the people I formed for myself
> that they may proclaim my praise.

While expressed in the imperative, what God is telling his people is that the former things they rightly celebrate so joyously – the exodus from Egypt and attendant events – pale in significance in comparison with what God is about to do in bringing his people back from exile. This hope for "new things" is taken up in the latter chapters of Isaiah and given a more explicitly cosmic orientation: the return will mean nothing less than a "new heaven and new earth," centered on a "new Jerusalem," and where "the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox" (65:17-25; 66:22-24).[101] As Greg Beale has pointed out, Paul's proclamation of a "new creation" and the reconciliation which is part of it is the fulfillment of these prophecies in Isaiah.[102] Jewish writers also used "new creation" language, probably in most cases in dependence on Isaiah, to depict God's new work for his people Israel.[103] Paul's phrase "new creation" therefore appears to be his way of summarizing the new state of affairs that has been inaugurated at Christ's first coming and is to be consummated at this second. As Ralph Martin summarizes, "with Christ's coming a whole new chapter in cosmic relationship to God opened and reversed the catastrophic effect of Adam's fall which began the old creation." [104]

In this age, the focus of God's new creation work is the transformation of human beings – in their relationship to God, first of all, and then also in their relationship to each other.[105] But, as we have seen, Paul includes the transformation of the natural world in his presentation of the eschatological program – explicitly in the consummation (Rom 8:19-22) and implicitly in the present (Col 1:20). We would therefore expect that the relation of human beings to their natural

environment is included in God's present work of new creation and that the climax of God's new creation work will include the transformation of the natural world.

3. *Dominion, Stewardship, and the Image of God*

A critical problem for the attempt to find affirmation of environmental concern in the NT is the apparent subsidiary or even casual role that this teaching plays in the NT. A few scattered verses, the interpretation of most of which is disputed, offer a very insubstantial foundation for a theological theme. The response to the problem, I believe, is to take more seriously than we sometimes do the imperative to work at a *biblical*-theological level, in which the OT contributes substantially (and not just as a source of NT imagery) to our final conclusions. Read in this light, I believe, a number of NT theological themes offer important implicit substantiation for the important of cosmic transformation in the continuing plan of God. One such theme is the restoration of the image of God in Christians via their incorporation into Christ, *the* "image of God." In this section of the paper, I will explore this theme, beginning with the OT teaching about the image of God and human dominion over the natural world.

As White's essay makes clear, the "dominion mandate" of Gen 1:26-28 has played a significant and controversial role in assessments of the relationship between Christian theology and environmental degradation.[106]

> Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock, over all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."[107]

The Hebrew verbs behind "rule over" (vv. 26 and 28) and "subdue" (v. 28) are strong ones and not only justify but mandate a significant degree of human intervention in the created world.[108] Indeed, as Fred van Dyke has pointed out, the very nature of human beings means that we will be involved in managing creation.[109] The question, therefore, is not whether human beings will (or should) "rule" the earth, but how they will rule it and to what ends. Several considerations are suggestive. The so-called "second creation story" in Genesis 2, with its assertion that God placed Adam in the Garden "to work it and take care of it" (2:15) suggests that humans are to rule and subdue the earth by carefully tending it.[110] The OT then pictures the promised land of Israel as a renewal of the Garden; and therefore included in the Mosaic law are many provisions for the care of the land itself. The attitude that is implied here arises from a more fundamental consideration: while humans are given the charge to "rule" the earth, that earth itself remains God's earth. We do not own the earth; we "manage" it on behalf of its true owner, the Lord God. As Philip Hughes puts it, "God, in short, gave man the world to master, but to master to the glory of the Creator, by whom man himself, to be truly human, must first be mastered."[111] The theocentric context of the biblical dominion mandate is absolutely basic and has given rise to the widespread interpretation of that mandate in terms of stewardship. [112] To be sure, Scripture never explicitly applies the language of stewardship to human interaction with the natural world. Nevertheless, the metaphor is applied to Christians in the NT[113] and captures well the nature of human rule over the cosmos that is established in Genesis 1. From a biblical-theological perspective, human dominion over creation must also be interpreted christologically. Christ's own sacrificial "rule" provides the ultimate model for our own rule of the earth. Douglas Hall, who has written extensively on this point, says, "If Christology is our foundational premise both for theological . . . and anthropological . . . doctrine, then 'dominion' was a way of designating the role of *Homo sapiens* within creation can only mean stewardship, and stewardship ultimately interpreted as love: sacrificial, self-giving love (*agape*)."[114]

Another connection between the dominion mandate in Genesis 1 and the NT might be found in the "image of God" language. Of course, theologians have argued for the entire course of Christian history over just what God intends us to understand from his resolution, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness."[115] Earlier theologians tended to think of some essence in human beings, such as rationality or conscience, while the tendency more recently is to focus on the relatedness of humans (with God, between the sexes, with creation) or on a particular function given to humans.[116] While it is far beyond the scope of this paper to issue any judgment on this matter, it is important for our purposes to note that most contemporary scholars think that the "image" includes in some degree the dominion that God gives humans over the natural world.[117] Of course, the dominion mandate immediately follows God's expression of intent to create humans beings in his image.[118] Moreover, "image" language was widely used in the Ancient Near East to refer to kings. The creation story, true to its tendency to present God's creation of the world in polemical interaction with other ancient creation stories, "democratizes" the image of God language, asserting that all human beings are created in God's image and therefore serve as his agents, or vice-regents, in governing the world he created.[119] The poetic meditation on the creation of human beings in Ps 8:3-8 strongly confirms this direction of interpretation:

> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them

> rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild beasts of the field, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

The Psalm applies royal imagery ("crowned"; "rulers") to the responsibility humans are given for the animal kingdom, substantiating, perhaps, the presence of similar royal imagery in the "image of God" language of Genesis 1.

One distinct advantage of the "relational" interpretation of the image of God is its ability to solve the long-standing debate about the presence of God's image in fallen human beings. Clear biblical passages in both the OT and NT appear to claim that the image remains intact in fallen humans (e.g., Gen 9:6 and Jas 3:9). [120] On the other hand, the NT also implies that the work of Christ involves, in some manner, the restoration of human beings in the image of God (e.g., Col 3:10). If we view the "image of God" as having to do primarily with the power to form appropriate relationships – between humans and God, among humans, and between humans and creation – justice can be done to both biblical perspectives.[121] The Fall did not obliterate the image in human beings, but it did introduce a fatal selfishness and corruption into the way the relationships that form that image are carried out.[122] When people are incorporated into Christ they begin the process of being "conformed" to his likeness (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; cf. Col 3:11), into the likeness of him who, as the second Adam, is the perfect and ultimate exemplar of the image of God (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4). Christians are therefore called and enabled to live out their relationships as God originally intended in creating humans in his image. One of those relationships, as we have seen, is that with the natural world. Read in this biblical-theological perspective, therefore, Christians' conformity to the image of God in Christ includes wise and loving stewardship of the created world.

The application to our relationships to the world of nature should be obvious. On the negative side, as Henri Blocher has said, "If man obeyed God, he would be the means of blessing to the earth; but in his insatiable greed, in his scorn for the balances built into the created order and in his short-sighted selfishness he pollutes and destroys it."[123] On the positive side, the restoration of the image enables Christians to become the master-pleasing stewards that we were meant to be.[124] Colin Gunton summarizes:

> To image the being of God towards the world, to be the priest of creation, is to behave towards the world in all its aspects, of work and of play, in such a way that it may come to be what it was created to be, that which praises its maker by becoming perfect in its own way. In all this, there is room for both usefulness and beauty to take due place, but differently according to differences of activity and object.[125]

IV. CONCLUSION: FROM ESCHATOLOGY TO ETHICS

As will be all too evident by this point, the preceding analysis is more in the nature of an initial probe than of a thorough study. Each text and issue deserves more careful treatment, and many other texts and issues need to be brought into the discussion.[126] But, preliminary though it is, this study suggests that the world of nature is by no means absent from the eschatological program set out in the NT. While rarely rising to the level of an explicit emphasis, and never the chief concern in and of itself, the world of nature is an integral component of God's new creation work.[127] An appropriately "whole Bible" theological perspective simply reinforces this point, for the NT must on this topic be filled out by the more expansive OT teaching on the importance of the world of nature in the plan of God.[128] And, as we have suggested at several points in this paper, the importance of the natural world in the NT is indirectly, but powerfully, supported by the central "material" doctrines of incarnation and resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is the "first fruits," the down payment and guarantee of the future and eternal material existence not only of Christians, but also, as Rev. 3:14 perhaps hints, of the entire cosmos.[129] As Richard Bauckham puts it,

> [T]he Christian tradition at its most authentic has realised that the promise of God made in the bodily resurrection of Christ is holistic and all-encompassing: for whole persons, body and soul, for all the networks of relationship in human society that are integral to being human, and for the rest of creation also, from which humans in their bodiliness are not to be detached. [130]

Nature therefore has a secure place in the inaugurated eschatology of the NT. The cross of Jesus Christ has "already" provided the basis for the restoration of nature to its intended place in the plan of God, though "not yet" do we see that restoration actually accomplished. In a few altogether too brief and superficial concluding remarks, I will explore the ethical implications of this eschatology. I will begin with implications of the futurist side of eschatology.

First, a negative point. Eschatology in the narrow and popular sense of the world is often cited as a reason why Christians are not (and should not be!) concerned about the environment. Al Truesdale is quite forthright, laying the blame for ethical quietism squarely at the door of "dispensational premillennialism" and arguing that evangelicals must rid themselves of such an eschatology if they are truly to commit themselves to environmental concern. As he puts it, "Until evangelicals purge from their vision of the Christian faith the wine of pessimistic dispensationalist premillennialism, the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation and the biblical image of stewardship will be orphans in their midst."[131] The charge that a robust futurist eschatology undercuts concerted attention to the needs of this world is, of course, an old one—and needs to be dismissed. True, Christians have sometimes used eschatology as an excuse for not involving themselves in the needs of this world. One hears far too often an unconcern for this world justified by the

slogan, "it is all going to burn anyway": since only the human soul will survive the fires of judgment only the human soul is really worth bothering about. But even if one holds the view that this world is destined for nothing but destruction, the biblical mandate for Christians to be involved in meeting the needs of the world in which we now live is clear and uncompromising. I may believe that the body I now have is destined for radical transformation; but I am not for that reason unconcerned about what I eat or how much I exercise.

On the other hand, it must be said that the conviction that this world is destined for renewal rather than destruction, as I have argued in this paper, does provide a more substantial basis for a Christian environmental ethic. NT eschatology is not intended to foster Christian passivity but to encourage God's people actively and vigorously to align their values and behavior with what it is that God is planning to do.[132] When we recognize that God plans to restore his creation, we should be motivated to "work for the renewal of God's creation and for justice within God's creation."[133] Just as, then, believers should be working to bring as many human beings as possible within the scope of God's reconciling act, so they should be working to bring the created world as close to that perfect restoration for which God has destined it.[134] The "not yet" of a restored creation demands an "already" ethical commitment to that creation now among God's people. To be sure, our efforts must always be tempered by the realization that it is finally God himself, in a future act of sovereign power, who will transform creation. And we encounter here the positive side of a robust eschatology. Christians must avoid the humanistic "Green utopianism" that characterizes much of the environmental movement. We will not by our own efforts end the "groaning" of the earth.[135] But this realism about our ultimate success should not deter our enthusiasm to be involved in working toward those ends that God will finally secure through his own sovereign intervention.[136]

If the "not yet" side of eschatology should stimulate us to work hard to bring the condition of the earth into that state for which God has destined it, the "already" side should remind us that our work, though always imperfect, is not in vain. As Francis Shaeffer argued in his pioneering *Pollution and the Death of Man,* inaugurated eschatology enables us to insist that "substantial healing can be a reality here and now."[137] Evangelicals generally recognize that, while the "healing" we offer the world is above all spiritual in focus, offering eternal life to sinful human beings, it also includes physical healing and social justice. To these, we contend, needs to be added environmental healing. Realism about the continued fallen state of this world reminds us that we will not erase illness and death from the world, that we will not eradicate poverty and injustice, and that we will not restore the earth to its pristine condition. But the realism stemming from the "not yet" side of eschatology should in no way deter us from vigorously pursuing each of these goals, motivated and empowered by the "already" of kingdom realization.

A truly Christian approach to the current environmental crisis will need to take into account the place of nature in NT eschatology that we have outlined in this paper. Nevertheless, this theology, in itself, provides few specific and practical guidelines for responsible Christian decision-making. How can we translate the general theological points about the place of nature in NT eschatology into specific and practical ethical guidelines? Thomas Derr, for one, is pessimistic about the practical usefulness of a theology of creation; he argues that Scripture simply does not reveal enough about God's intentions for nature to provide a basis for good ethical decisions.[138] Derr's reservations are to some extent justified, of course: even if one were to accept all the theological points I have made in this essay, disagreement about specific policies would still arise. However, as somewhat of a postscript I would like at least very tentatively to suggest some perspectives that might help to implement the theology we have described. I summarize these via three crucial NT ethical principles: love, wisdom, and transformation.

Central to new covenant ethics is the command that we love our neighbors. The harsh realities of the ecological crisis we now face force us to ask seriously whether we can truly love others without caring for the environment in which they live. At the heart of the modern discipline of ecology is the realization that everything is connected to everything else. The same point applies to Christian ethics. My own desire to maintain a luxurious western lifestyle by keeping energy prices low forces power plants to avoid the expense of installing mechanisms effectively to clean their emissions and thus leads to suffering and even death for asthma sufferers. But our Christian obligation extends, of course, to all people. As Speth has made very clear, the truly significant environmental issues we now face are global in nature.[139] The "others" whom I am to love are not just my actual neighbors, but the billions all over the planet who might face devastation if global warming becomes as serious as many predict.

But Christ gave us two "great commandments." We are not only to love our fellow human beings as ourselves, but, first of all, to love the Lord our God (Matt 22:34-40). And it is the desire to love and honor God that is our most basic motivation to engage in environmental healing. In *Resurrection and Moral Order,* Oliver O'Donovan argues for a "creation ethics," in which, as he puts it, "The way the universe *is,* determines how man *ought* to behave himself in it."[140] He argues that the Resurrection of Christ reaffirms God's original creation decision with respect to Adam, affirming the "order" that God has given to this life. Clearly, it is vital that people learn to live in accordance with that order. Kingdom and creation cannot be set against each other. Humans function in a creation ordered in certain ways by God himself. O'Donovan himself suggests the consequences for a Christian environmental ethics, founded on the biblical teaching about the intrinsic goodness and ultimate destiny of the created world. Christians ultimately care for

creation not because of our own self-interest or even out of love for others, but because the creation is God's. He asserts that

> Man's monarchy over nature can be healthy only if he recognizes it as something itself given in the nature of things, and therefore limited by the nature of things. For if it were true that he imposed his rule upon nature from without, then there would be no limit to it. It would have been from the beginning a crude struggle to stamp an inert and formless nature with the insignia of his will. Such has been the philosophy bred by a scientism liberated from the discipline of Christian metaphysics. It is not what the Psalmist meant by the dominion of man, which was a worshipping and respectful sovereignty, a glad responsibility for the natural order which he both discerned and loved.[141]

A further step toward respecting this "order" of creation can be taken by the cultivation of wisdom. Biblical wisdom is especially the practical ability to discern the nature of things from a divine perspective. The NT frequently calls on the believer to act on the basis of wisdom: to treat all things in accordance with their divine reality. As those who are being renewed in the image of God and are thereby enabled to be the loving stewards of the earth humans were created to be, we need to understand as best we can the divine nature of the "nature" for which we have been given responsibility. I defended above the appropriateness of the stewardship metaphor as a way of summarizing the nature of human dominion over the earth. But it is relevant to our point here to note that the usefulness of the metaphor has been severely criticized by some, either because it retains too much anthropocentrism, or because it is too vague to be useful in practice. The deep ecologist Arne Naess puts it well: "The arrogance of stewardship consists in the idea of superiority which underlies the thought that we exist to watch over nature like a highly respected middleman between the Creator and the Creation. We know too little about what happens in nature to take up the task."[142] We have already dismissed the anthropocentric side of this objection: humans are, indeed, according to Genesis 1, the "middlemen" between God and creation. Among other things, our appointed role as stewards means that a biblical environmental ethic will avoid the uncritical hostility toward technology that characterizes some of the more extreme forms of environmentalism. God has given human beings the mandate to use their unique abilities creatively to intervene in the natural world.[143] Human exercise of dominion must combine a "hands-off" approach in some matters with wise intervention in others. Both conservation and development are integral aspects of human "rule" of the earth.[144] And here is where wisdom is needed. We begin with what God tells us in Scripture about the world we are called upon to manage. However, as we have noted, the information Scripture gives us, while fundamental to everything else, is limited and quite unspecific. Scripture must therefore be supplemented by what science tells us about the world that God has made. Christians should seek the best information available about the earth over which we have been appointed stewards. While we have come to recognize that science is by no means an objective and neutral endeavor, scientific studies, subjected to the scrutiny of other scientists, have the ability to reveal essential truth about our world, its problems, and its future. As John Stek puts it, "As we face the world, we must do so as those who know the Creator-King; as we face God, we must do so as those who know the creation. We can fulfill this vocation, fulfill the very purpose of our being, only as we rightly know both God and creation."[145]

Implementing the theology about the natural world that we have outlined above, finally, will require transformation. As those living in the "already" of eschatological realization, Christians are being renewed in their thinking (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23), progressively being given the ability to look at all the world as God does. As McGrath has rightly noted,

> Lynn White is completely right when he argues that human self-centeredness is the root of our ecological crisis, but quite wrong when he asserts that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. The most self-centered religion in history is the secular creed of twentieth-century Western culture, whose roots lie in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and whose foundation belief is that humanity is the arbiter of all ideas and values.[146]

Wolfhart Pannenberg makes a similar point. Referring to White's thesis, he notes that it was only at the beginning of the 18th century that the dominion command was interpreted in terms of absolute human power over nature – just at the time "when modern humanity in its self-understanding was cutting its ties with the creator God of the Bible."[147] Observers outside Christianity have made the same point. Kate Soper, for instance, argues that if we are serious about helping nature, we need to be willing to forego material benefits; "Or, to put it more positively, we need to re-think hedonism itself. . . . An eco-friendly consumption would not involve a reduction of living standards, but rather an altered conception of the standard itself."[148] Christians, transformed in our basic mind-set through the Holy Spirit, should be in the vanguard of those who live and teach this new standard of hedonism.[149]

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[1] John Reumann, *Creation and New Creation: The Past, Present, and Future of God's Creative Activity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973) 8, citing Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 287.

[2] Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967) 1203-7. White's paper has been reprinted in many places; references in this article are to *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*, ed. R. J. Berry (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000) 31-42. In basic agreement with White is Roderick Nash, who faults Puritan theology especially for the environmental crisis in North America (Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* [3d ed.; New Haven: Yale University

Press, 1982]). William Leiss is representative of many authors who take a more nuanced approach to the ideological history. He claims that Christianity originally kept in tension the concept of human dominion over creation with human subordination to and accountability to God. It was when Christianity ceased to be a vital component of the western world view that the dominion mandate, stripped of its theological context, became a basis for environmental neglect (William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994] 30-35). Robert J. Faricy, on the other hand, is more specific in his charge: it is "the Christianity of the protestant reformation" that introduced an unfortunate split between person and nature ("The Person-Nature Split: Ecology, Women and Human Life," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53 [1988] 203-18).

[3] White, "Historic Roots," 38.

[4] Often cited as an important source for Christian passivity toward the world of nature is the medieval scholastic "chain of being" perspective; as it is put by Peter Lombard in the *Sentences:* "As man is made for the sake of God, namely, that he may serve him, so is the world made for the sake of man, that it may serve him." (2.1.8). On the theological justification for an instrumentalist view of nature in 17th-18th c. England, see Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983) 18-22.

[5] A pioneer in the deep ecology movement was Arne Naess; see esp. his *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). He calls for a "substantial reorientation of our whole civilisation" (p. 45). Deep ecology is characterized by ecocentrism, in contrast to what deep ecologists label a "'shallow' anthropocentric environmental movement" ("Preface," in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism* [ed. George Sessions; Boston: Shambhala, 1995] xii).

[6] See the useful surveys in Max Oelschlager, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 280-353; Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 90-163. For a survey of past attitudes in the West, see Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967).

[7]Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 5.

[8]On the former, see, e.g. Sally McFague, *The Body of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); on the latter, see, e.g. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992) and the discussion in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether; Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions Publications; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) 97-124. Representative of many others who narrate their "conversion" from some form of historic Christian faith to a more environmentally friendly religion is Donald A. Crosby, who embraces a "religion of nature" that asserts the "cosmic primacy of nature" (Donald A. Crosby, *A Religion of Nature* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002]; see also Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God* [Rochester, Ver.: Park Street Press, 1991]).

[9]See Lewis W. Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis of our Environmental Crisis," in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology* (ed. Ian G. Barbour; Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973) 31-42; Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, 33, 43-67; Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 40-85; Thomas Sieger Derr, *Ecology and Human Need* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 25-33; and the more general survey of Louis Dupré, . It should also be noted that White's essay is not as hostile to Christianity as some references to his essay would suggest (Derr, *Ecology,* 25-33). Another factor that complicates the debate about Christianity's responsibility for the abuse of nature is the sad but all-too-familiar difference between the teaching and the practice of the faith. McNeill, for instance, points out that environmental degradation is found in virtually all cultures. He concludes that either 1) religious traditions in general encourage predatory conduct; or 2) religions do not notably constrain behavior with respect to the natural world. The latter, he suggests, is the more probable. "Few believers knew more than a smattering of the sacred scriptures. And most of those who did, being human, easily allowed expediency and interest more than the scriptures of religious texts to govern their behavior. Every durable body of scripture is ambiguous, self-contradictory, and amenable to different interpretations to suit different circumstances." He concludes: "In the unusually secular age of the twentieth century, the ecological impact of religions, rarely great, shrank to the vanishing point." McNeill, *Something New under the Sun*, 327-28 (quotations from p. 328).

[10] Wheaton: Crossway.

[11] Alister E. McGrath, *The Reenchantment of Nature: The Denial of Religion and the Ecological Crisis* (New York: Doubleday, 2002). This is not to say that White's case should be dismissed out of hand. As Osborn argues, there is a pervasive ambivalence in western Christianity toward the natural world (*Guardians of Creation*, 24-40).

[12] For a survey of responses from evangelicals, along with an analysis of some of the religious and social circumstances in which they developed, see David Kenneth Larsen, "God's Gardeners: American Protestant Evangelicals Confront Environmentalism, 1967-2000" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 2001; a survey of early evangelical responses is provided by Henlee H. Barnette, *The Church and the Ecological Crisis* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972]). A survey broader in its scope, though dated, is Joseph K. Sheldon, *Rediscovery of Creation: A Bibliographical Study of the Church's Response to the Environmental Crisis* (ATLA Bibliography Series 29; Metuchen, NJ: The American Theological Library Association and the Scarecrow Press, 1992). See also the helpful taxonomy of approaches set forth in Raymond Grizzle, Paul E. Rothrock, and Christopher B. Barrett, "Evangelicals and Environmentalism: Past, Present, and Future," *TrinJ* 19 (1998) 3-27.

[13]The most significant organization at the theoretical level are the Evangelical Environmental Network (www.creationcare.org) and the AuSable Institute (www.AuSable.org). A Rocha is an evangelical organization devoted to the practice of creation care (http://en.arocha.org).

[14] See especially the writings of E. Calvin Beisner: *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988); *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources and the Future* (Westchester,

IL: Crossway, 1990); *Man, Economy, and the Environment in Biblical Perspective* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1994); *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 1997). Similar in general outlook, though a bit more welcoming of environmental initiatives, is Derr, *Ecology and Human Need*; idem, *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism* (Abingdon Press Studies in Christian Ethics and Economic Life 2; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996). See also the manifesto of the Acton Institute, "The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship," with accompanying essays (*Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition: Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant Wisdom on the Environment* [ed. Michael R. Barkey; Grand Rapids: Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, 2000]. (A brief analysis of the evangelical "backlash" to environmentalism is given by Richard T. Wright, who suggests [dubiously, I think] that the backlash is due mainly to political commitments: "Tearing Down the Green: Environmental Backlash in the Evangelical Sub-culture," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 47 [1995] 80-91.) Though not from a Christian perspective, note also William Tucker, *Progress and Privilege: America in the Age of Environmentalism* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1982), who concludes his book: "The Age of Environmentalism has been a respite, a period when we took time from the business of the world to learn to enjoy nature, appreciate the limits of our accomplishments, and reset our bearings. We are the wiser for it and have environmentalism to thank. But such interludes cannot last forever. History is calling us. There is still much to be done for the progress of humanity. It is time to begin again." (p. 284).

[15] Especially productive to environmentally oriented theology have been 1) studies on the creation accounts and the human role in creation (which we look at briefly later in this essay); 2) analysis of the so-called "creation," or "cosmic" covenant, reflected explicitly in Genesis 9 (on which see especially Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* [Heythrop Monographs 7; London: Sheed & Ward, 1992]; cf. also Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 52-57; Ken Gnanakan, *God's World: Biblical Insights for a Theology of the Environment* [International Study Guide 36; London: SPCK, 1999] 60-63; Bernhard Anderson, "Creation and the Noahic Covenant," in *From Creation to New Creation* [Old Testament Perspectives; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994] 151-64); 3) the poetic depictions of the intrinsic beauty and significance of the earth and its flora and fauna; 4) the prominence given to care for the land in the Mosaic covenant (on which see especially Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* [2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002]; and also Geoffrey A. Lilburne, *A Sense of Place: A Christian Theology of the Land* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1989]; Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996], who argues that the "J" source betrays the perspective of small farmers, with a concomitant concern for solidarity with the land), and 5) the prophetic portrayal of the coming kingdom in terms of a renewed and peaceful earth.

[16]Paul H. Santmire, "Partnership with Nature according to the Scriptures: Beyond the Theology of Stewardship," *Christian Scholars Review* 32 (2003) 382 n. 4; see also David Rhoads, "Reading the New Testament in the Environmental Age," *CurTM* 24 (1997) 259.

[17]For a brief analysis of why the NT is relatively silent about nature, see John Austin Baker, "Biblical Views of Nature," in *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology* (ed. Charles Birch, William Eakin, and Jay. B. McDaniel ; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990) 20-22.

[18]See e.g., Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,* 185; Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (2d ed.; Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2002) 224-25; John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (New York: Scribners, 1974) 10-27 (Passmore does not, however, carefully distinguish "New Testament" from "early Christian theology").

[19] Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. George Arthur Buttrick; 4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 1:419-20.

[20] Charles H. Scobie, "The Challenge of Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 42 (1991) 49-51 (this article, which is revised and abbreviated in Scobie's full-blown biblical theology, *The Ways of Our God: an Approach to Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003] 46-49, is an excellent survey of some of the key issues in contemporary biblical theology). See also Dan Via, *What is New Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); D. A. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," *BBR* 5 (1995) 17-41, B. Childs, "Some Reflections on the Search for a Biblical Theology," *HBT* 4 (1982) 9, and especially, for the hermeneutical issues we touch on above, Kevin Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000) 52-64. A parallel to the method we are advocating here might be found in the efforts of biblical theologians to find resources in Scripture to respond to the assumptions about the nature and origins of human life reflected in the Roe v. Wade decision.

[21] I have neither the space nor the expertise to provide justification for my language of "ecological crisis." And, of course, some scientists and even more politicians debunk any idea of a crisis (from a scientific standpoint, see especially Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World* [Cambridge: University Press, 2001]; a summary of the criticism of Lomborg can be found in James Gustave Speth, *Red Sky at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Enivornment* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004] 113-15. See also Derr, *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism*, 62-78). But most scientists are convinced that language of a crisis is quite justified, as sophisticated technology, coupled with a modernist western ideology, has led to a manipulation and despoilation of the created world unprecedented in human history (see especially the excellent summary in Speth, *Red Sky at Morning,* who points out that progress on some local environmental issues in the developed world [e.g. pollution, water quality] should not blind us to the totally inadequate response to global issues [e.g. global warming]). See also J. R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: an Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); and the recently released UN report, "Living Beyond our Means: Natural Assets and Human Well-being" (prelim. draft, Millennium Ecostudy Assessment; www.millenniumassesment.org//en/products.Boardstatement.asp), whose opening statement reads: "At the heart of this assessment is a stark warning. Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted" (p. 2). To be sure, human beings have frequently created *local* ecological disasters as great as anything we see today. But technological expertise multiplied by the growth

of world population has brought unprecedented *global* ecological problems (I am indebted to my Wheaton colleague Joseph Spradley for this point). It should also be noted, however, that care for the natural world does not require a "crisis" for its motivation, nor are ecological problems ever likely to go away as long as fallen and self-centered human beings are in charge of things (Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992] 105). John Black, writing in 1970, resists the language of "crisis" because it suggests an immediate, one-time problem that ignores the basic long-term changes that ecological healing requires (*The Dominion of Man: The Search for Ecological Responsibility* [Edinburgh: University Press, 1970] 129; cf. also Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in Theology and the Christian Life* [Leicester: Apollos, 1993] 20-22).

[22] Richard Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 3-4, quotation from p. 4. See also Steven Bouma-Prediger, who claims that "My reading . . . is unapologetically informed by ecology and, more exactly, by the challenges we face as we attempt to be faithful followers of Jesus in an ecologically imperiled age" (*For the Beauty of the Earth* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001] 89-90 [90]; see also Rhoads, "Reading the New Testament," 260). Bouma-Prediger may, however, move too far in the direction of a subjective and reader-oriented hermeneutic, as his comment in the same context reveals: "there is more than one good reading of Scripture."

[23] Derr, *Ecology and Human Need*, 50.

[24] E.g., Greg Beale, "The Eschatological Concept of New Testament Theology," in *"The Reader Must Understand": Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (ed. K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliott; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1997) 11-52.

[25] On the theological significance of the land in OT prophecy, see, e.g. Antoine DeGuglielmo, "The Fertility of the Land in the Messianic Prophecies," *CBQ* 19 (1957) 306-11. W. D. Davies surveys Jewish views about the land; he notes that some Jewish traditions spiritualize the land (Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* [Berkeley: University of California, 1974] 75-158). See also Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 168-69.

[26] For more on some of these themes, particularly in the OT, see especially William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983) 88-94.

[27] Donald Gowan rightly stresses that the OT knows nothing of a redemption of humanity that takes place without the renewal of the world (Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) 113-18; cf also Richard J. Clifford, "The Bible and the Environment," in *Preserving the Creation: Environmental Theology and Ethics* [ed. Kevin W. Irwin and Edmund D. Pellegrino; Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994] 14).

[28] I should note, however, that the NT is not absolutely consistent in its universalizing; I think that Romans 11:12-32 predicts a spiritual conversion of many Jews in the last days (see my *The Epistle to the Romans* [New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996] 710-26).

[29]Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 368.

[30] Walter Brueggemann, for instance, in the new edition of his classic study of the theme, does not think that the land promise is spiritualized to the extent that Davies does (*The Land*, 160-68).

[31] Alister E. McGrath, *Nature*, vol. 1 of *A Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 81-133; Kate Soper, *What Is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 15-21, passim.

[32] McGrath, *Nature*, 133.

[33] J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 21. For a discussion of Moltmann's "ecological theology," see Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann* (American Academy of Religion Academy Series 91; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 103-34, 217-63. Kate Soper correctly notes that most of the usual ethical bases for "nature" preservation inevitably depend on human values (*What Is Nature?* 252).

[34] Quotations of the Bible, unless otherwise noted, are from the TNIV.

[35] E.g., H. R. Balz, *Heilsvertrauen und Weltenfahrung: Strukturen des paulinischen Eschatologie nach Römer 8,18-39* (BEvT 59; Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 47-48; W. Foerster, "κτίζω," *TDNT* 3.1031; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 233-35.

[36] Augustine thought that all people were intended; for a restriction to unbelievers, see, e.g. N. Walter, "Gottes Zorn und das 'Harren der Kreatur': Zur Korrespondenz zwischen Römer 1,18-32 und 8,19-22," in *Christus Bezeugen: Für Wolfgang Trilling* (ed. K. Kertlege, T. Holtz, and C.-P. März; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1990) 220-23.

[37] κτίσις occurs with this meaning in Wis 2:6; 5:17(?); 16:24; 19:6. See, e.g. Hae-Kyung Chang, *Die Knechtschaft und Befreiung der Schöpfung: Eine Exegetische Untersuchung zu Römer 8,19-22* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2000) 85-90. Apart from the contested occurrences in Romans 8 and in Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17 (see the later section in this paper), only in Col 1:23 does Paul possibly use κτίσις to refer to human beings only (the gospel has been proclaimed to "every creature under heaven"); but even here, the word might refer to creation generally (cf. ESV: "in all creation under heaven" [also ASV; NASB]). Other occurrences of κτίσις in Paul are in Rom 1:20, 25; 8:39; Col 1:15. Outside of Paul in the NT, κτίσις refers to the "creation" in a general sense in every place except the difficult 1 Pet 2:13 (see Mark 10:6; 13:19; Heb 4:13; 9:11; 2 Pet 3:4; Rev 3:14).

[38] G. W. H. Lampe, "The New Testament Doctrine of *Ktisis*," *SJT* 17 (1964) 457-58; Brendan Byrne, "Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8.18-22," in *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth* (ed. Norman C. Habel; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 199.

[39] Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984) 183-84; cf. also John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 229; William J. Dumbrell, "Genesis 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott Hafemann; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002) 64; R. J. Berry, "Conclusions," in *The Care of Creation,* 177-80.

[40] See, e.g., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1039b; Plato, *Republic* 546a. I am indebted for these references to a paper on Rom 8:19-22 by Jonathan Moo (produced at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary). This seems to be the sense of Col 2:22.

[41] This does not necessarily mean, however, that physical death itself was first introduced into the created world at the Fall. On the contrary, the necessary continuity between the world that God created (Genesis 1-2) and the world that we now observe suggests that physical decay and death – an indispensable component of the created world as we know it – were likely present from the very beginning. To be sure, as Rom 5:12, for instance, makes clear, Adam introduced "death" into the world. But the "world" Paul has in view here is almost certainly the world of human beings (compare the roughly parallel vv. 18a and 19a), and the "death" to which Paul refers here is mainly (though not exclusively) spiritual death (compare again v. 12 with vv. 18 and 19, where "condemnation" occurs). What was Adam's relation to death before the Fall, then? Some think, as Gerald Bray puts it, that Adam was "a mortal being who was protected from death as long as he was obedient to the commands of God: disobedience removed the protection, and Adam was allowed to complete the life cycle which was normal to his physical being" (Gerald L. Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man." *TynBul* 42 [1991] 216). But it is preferable to think of Adam as possessing conditional immortality, with physical death as "a possibility arising from his constitution" (Blocher, *In the Beginning,* 184-87 [187]).

[42]Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 39.

[43] My own translation: I take the genitive δόξης as loosely possessive.

[44] Lampe ("New Testament Doctrine of *Ktisis,*" 456) speaks of creation as the "stage" for human salvation.

[45] See, e.g. J. Baumgarten, *Paulus und das Apokalyptic: Die Auslegung apokalyptischer Überlieferungen en den echten Paulusbriefen* (WMANT 22; Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1975) 175-78; W. Bindemann, *Hoffnung des Schöpfung: Römer 8,18-27 und die Frage einer Theologie der Befreiung von Mensch und Natur* (Neukirchener Studien 14; Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1983); A. Vögtle, "Röm 8, 19-22: eine schöpfungstheologie oder anthropologisch-soteriologische Aussage?" in *Mélanges bibliques in hommage au Béda Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamps; Paris: Ducolot, 1970) 351-66; Reumann, *Creation and New Creation*, 98-99.

[46] See James D. G. Dunn, *A Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 101.

[47] Silvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (JSNTSup 181; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 102-14.

[48] This covenant may be the Noahic covenant, with its prohibitions re. taking human life and restrictions on taking animal life (Bernhard Anderson, "The Slaying of the Fleeing, Twisting Serpent: Isaiah 27:1 in Context," *From Creation to New Creation,* 201-6).

[49] From a Paper written at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

[50]Note in this regard the claim of Davies that Paul attaches the land promise to the issue of the law, viewing both as belonging to a parenthetical stage of salvation history now past (*Gospel and Land,* 178-79).

[51] See esp. Isa 11:10-14; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 54:3; Jer 4:2; Ps 72:8-11; Sir 44:21; *Jub.* 19:21; *2 Bar.* 14:13; 51:3. See on this N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. L. E. Keck, vol. 10; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002) 495.

[52] Another text that could be considered is Heb 12:26-27 (referring to Hag 2:6): "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain."

[53]E.g. Gen 1:1, passim. In Revelation, see, e.g. 20:11; cf. 5:3 (with "under the earth" added); 10:6 (with "in the sea"; cf. also 12:12; 14:7, with both "sea" and "fountains"); 5:13 adds both "under the earth" and "in the sea." TNIV translates in both Rev 21:1 and 2 Pet 3:12 "a new heaven and a new earth." In fact the Greek word for "heaven" is plural in the 2 Peter text (ου□ρανοί; Peter uses the plural throughout this passage: vv. 7, 10, 12); it is also plural in the Hebrew of the key OT background texts (Isa 65:17; 66:22-24), though singular in the LXX. Revelation 21:1 uses the singular form in the Greek. The issue is stylistic rather than conceptual: the word is always plural in the Hebrew, and both the LXX translators and NT authors sometimes use the plural in Greek to conform to the Hebrew. The NT tends to use the singular form when ου□ρανός refers to the portion of the universe distinguished from the earth and the plural when ου□ρανός refers to the abode of God and angels (BDAG).

[54] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: 1999) 1040. Contra, e.g. Margaret Barker, who speaks of the new heaven and new earth as "beyond time and matter" (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000] 367).

[55] Richard Cartwright Austin warns about the tendency in Christian history to spiritualize images of future restoration (*Hope for the Land: Nature in the Bible* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1988] 214).

[56] Only a handful of NT passages may refer to Heaven as the destiny of Christians after death (e.g. Matt 5:12; Luke 16:22; John 14:2-4; 2 Cor 5:1).

[57] Note, for instance, Richard John Neuhaus, "Christ and Creation's Longing," in *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 129: "One of the problems [in creating interest in the environment], I suspect, is that contemporary Christians do not take as seriously as we should our human embodiment and our hope for the resurrection."

[58] E.g. R. Larry Overstreet thinks that 2 Peter 3 might be predicting the annihilation of atoms themselves through a nuclear reaction ("A Study of 2 Peter 3:10-13," *BSac* 137 [1980] 363-65).

[59] 65:17: "See, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." There is debate over whether the "former things" refers to the "former troubles" (cf. v. 16) or to the "former heaven and earth" (for the latter, see, e.g., Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* [repr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954] 2.488; cf. NLT). 66:22-24: "'As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,'" declares the Lord,"'so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all people will come and bow down before me,'" says the Lord. "'And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to the whole human race.'"

[60] The renovation idea is found in, e.g. *Jub.* 1:29; 4:21; 22:18; *1 Enoch* 45:4-5; *2 Bar.* 32:2-6; *T. Levi* 18:5-10; the replacement motif appears in, e.g. *1 Enoch* 72:1; 83:3-4; 91:16; *2 Bar.* 44:12; *Syb. Or.* 3:75-90.

[61] David Mathewsson provides a useful survey of interpretation on this matter (*A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5* [JSNTSup 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003] 135-39). He comes down hesitantly on the side of annihilation/new creation.

[62] Grant Osborne, *The Book of Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 721 (he compares 16:20).

[63] The parallels he cites, from the OT and Jewish writings, refer to cosmic disturbances in the presence of divine visitation; but none uses the language of "fleeing" that we find here in Rev 20:11. The closest parallels to Rev 20:11 are Ps 104:7 – "He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight" (quoting vv. 5-7) and Isa 17:13 – " Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale."

[64] David Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (WBC; Waco, Tex: Word, 1998) 1101, 1117; he compares *1 Enoch* 96:16.

[65] The closest biblical parallel to John's language is found in Theodotion's version of Dan 2:35, where the materials of the great statute in Nebuchadnezzar's dream are carried away by the wind, and "no place was found for them" (καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς). The immediate reference (within the parameters of the dream) is to a material phenomenon, but the meaning has to do with judgment. See also Rev 12:8.

[66] BDAG classify the meaning of the verb here (ἀπέρχομαι) under the heading "to discontinue as a condition or state." Gale Heide argues that "pass away" refers to the heaven and earth having moved out of John's sight (Gale Z. Heide, "What Is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3," *JETS* 40 [1997] 43-45), but this is not clear. Note also that, while Osborne thinks 20:11 and 21:1 suggest destruction, he also insists that there is some kind of continuity between the old creation and the new (*Revelation,* 730). While a different verb is involved (παρέρχομαι), the idea here in Revelation is similar to Jesus' predictions of the "passing away" of the heaven and the earth (Matt 5:18; 24:35//Mark 13:31//Luke 21:33; 16:17). The same verb appears in similar contexts elsewhere in the NT: in 2 Cor 5:17, where the new creation is preceded by the "passing away" of the "old"; and in 2 Pet 3:10, where the "passing away" of the heavens in predicted.

[67] David Russell, *The "New Heavens and New Earth": Hope for Creation in Jewish Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Apocalyptic Literature 1; Philadelphia: Visionary, 1996) 206-9.

[68] E.g. Bouma-Prediger (*For the Beauty of the Earth*, 76-77) deals with v. 10 but with none of the other key verses in the chapter. Osborn claims that "nowhere [in the Bible] is it suggested that the biophysical universe will cease to be" without even mentioning 2 Peter 3 (*Guardians of Creation,* 100).

[69] See, e.g., Roselyne Dupont-Roc, "Le motif de la création selon 2 Pierre 3," *RB* 101 (1994) 95-114.

[70] See the survey of evidence from both the OT and Judaism in Rudolf Mayer, *Die biblische Vorstellung vom Weltenbrand: Eine Untersuchung über die Beziehungen zwischen Parsismus und Judentum* (Bonner Orientlistische Studien 4; Bonn: University of Bonn, 1956) 79-120 (summary on 117-20).

[71] See, e.g., David S. Wise, "Appendix: A Review of Environmental Stewardship Literature and the New Testament," in *The Environment and the Christian*, 130-34; David Wenham, "Being 'Found' on the Last Day: New Light on 2 Peter 3.10 and 2 Corinthians 5.3," *NTS* 33 (1987) 477-79; cf. also Heide, "What is New," 46-55, who stresses the function of apocalyptic metaphor in the passage.

[72] Jerome H. Neyrey hypothesizes that these mockers were influenced by Epicurean notions (*2 Peter, Jude* [AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993] 122-28).

[73] Peter might be picking up an early tradition that associated the "destruction" of the world with water (in Noah's time) with the "destruction" of the world in fire at the end (cf., e.g. Melito of Sardis: "There was a flood of water. . . . There will be flood of fire, and the earth will be burned up together with its mountains"). As Carson Thiede has pointed out, some early Christians taught the destruction of the world through fire (e.g., Justin, *Apology* 7.1-3); others resisted the idea, insisting that the world will not be destroyed (e.g., Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.19-20; 2:11-12; 4:13) ("A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix," *JSNT* 26 [1986] 83-87).

[74] The reading εὑρεθήσεται ("will be found") is generally preferred as being the more difficult reading. The question is whether it is *too* difficult and an emendation such as the addition of a negative particle should be adopted (see the discussion in Richard Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude* [WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983] 318-19) – the language of "not being found" is common to depict eschatological judgment (e.g., Rev 16:20). However adopting an emendation should be a last resort; and, as Bauckham argues, while no precise parallel to the usage here can be found, the text with εὑρεθήσεται can make sense. Wenham appeals, for instance, to parables of Jesus in which "being found" refers to God's judgment on the last day (e.g., Matt 24:46; "Being 'Found' on the Last Day," 477-79). Frederick Danker, while suggesting a different emendation in the clause, refers to the use of "being found" in *Pss. Sol.* 17:10 ("II Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10," *ZNW* 53 [1962] 82-86).

[75] See, e.g. Isa 30:30; 66:15-16; Nah 1:6; Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Mic 1:3-4; Isa 63:19-64:1 LXX. Al Wolters suggests the language may refer to a refining process by which the present world is "purged" of evil ("Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10," *WTJ* 49 [1987] 405-13).

[76] Louw-Nida, 20.53. The verb means basically "loose," "release," from which meaning the ideas of "break" (e.g., John 10:35) and "destroy" or "break down" are derived. The closest parallels to the use of λύω in 1 Peter 3 are: John 2:19 ("destroy this temple"); Eph 2:14 ("breaking down the dividing wall of hostility"); 1 John 3:8 ("to destroy the devil's works").

[77] The other NT words for "destroy" and "destruction" also often refer to much less than "annihilation." They can refer to land that has lost its fruitfulness (ὄλεθρος in Ezek 6:14; 14:16); to ointment that is poured out wastefully and to no apparent purpose (ἀπώλεια in Matt 26:8; Mark 14:4); to wineskins that can no longer function because they have holes in them (ἀπόλλυμι in Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37); to a coin that is useless because it is "lost" (ἀπόλλυμι in Luke 15:9); or to the entire world that "perishes," as an inhabited world, in the Flood (2 Pet 3:6). In none of these cases do the objects cease to exist; they cease to be useful or to exist in their original, intended state. In other words, these key terms appear to be used in general much like we use the word

"destroy" in the sentence "The tornado destroyed the house." The component parts of that house did not cease to exist; but the entity "house," a structure that provides shelter for human beings, ceased to exist.

[78] Russell, *"New Heavens and New Earth,"* 186-97; William A. Dyrness, *Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983) 179.

[79] Gunton, *Christ and Creation,* 31. See also Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 168-70.

[80] Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Christ's Resurrection and the Creation's Vindication," in *The Environment and the Christian: What Does the New Testament Say About the Environment?* (ed. Calvin DeWitt; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991) 62. The "cosmic Christ" idea has been fundamental in theological approaches to the environment. See especially Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). (And for a critical appraisal of Fox's work, see "Margaret Goodall and John Reader, "Why Matthew Fox Fails to Change the World," in *The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology* [ed. Ian Ball, et al.; London: SPCK, 1992] 104-19.)

[81] E.g. Bouma-Prediger advances quickly from the claim that "Christ's work is a wide as creation itself" to the claim that "Jesus comes to save not just us but the whole world" to the conclusion that Col 1:20 teaches the "salvation of all things" (*For the Beauty of the Earth,* 124). A fountainhead for the modern appropriation of Colossians to support various forms of cosmological or universal teachings was Joseph Sittler's 1961 address WCC address, "Called to Unity" (published in various places, including *Currents in Theology and Mission* 16 [1989] 5-13). John Barclay notes the way in which the cosmology of Colossians has influenced current debates about both religious pluralism and environmentalism (John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997] 13).

[82] The "hymn" has spawned an academic cottage industry which we cannot (and need not) even survey here. See especially N. Kehl, *Der Christushynmus im Kolosserbrief: Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Kol. 1:12-20* (SBM 1; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967); J.-N. Aletti, *Colossiens 1:15-20: Genre et exégèse du texte. Fonction de la thématique sapientielle* (AnBib 91; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981); Christian Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus: Untersuchungen zu Form, traditionsgeschichtlichem Hintergrund und Aussage von Kol 1:15-20* (WUNT 2.131; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," in *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) 99-119.

[83] See Rom 5:10[twice]; 2 Cor 5:18, 19, 20 (all using καταλλάσσω); Rom 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18, 19 (καταλλαγή); and Col 1:22 and Eph 2:16 (using ἀποκαταλλάσσω, as in Col 1:20). Paul uses the verb καταλλάσσω once in a non-theological sense to refer to reconciliation between marriage partners (1 Cor 7:11). The compound verb that Paul uses in Col 1:20 (and in Col 1:22 and Eph 2:16) is unattested before Paul, and interpreters sometimes suggest that Paul has coined the word to make a particular point: that, for instance, it emphasizes the idea of a restored relationship (Paul Beasley-Murray, "Colossians 1:15-20: an Early Christian Hymn Celebrating the Lordship of Christ," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F.F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday* [ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 178-79) or, perhaps more likely, simply the completeness of the reconciliation (M. J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991] 50). The claim that Paul limits the language elsewhere to the divine-human relationship might be questioned in light of 2 Cor 5:19, which refers to God's "reconciling the world to himself." But, as the following qualification ("not counting people's sins against them") suggests, the "world" here may refer to the world of humanity.

[84] I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of 'Reconciliation'," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 126-27; cf. also T. K. Abbot, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897) 222-25.

[85] See, e.g. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," 100-13. We should note that a few scholars think that the author of Colossians is solely responsible for the passage (e.g., George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School* [WUNT 2.171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003] 115-19).

[86] Verse 16 (twice): "For in him *all things* were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things* have been created through him and for him"; verse 17 (twice): "He is before *all things*, and in him *all things* hold together"; verse 18b: "so that *in everything* he might have the supremacy." The Greek (except for case changes) is the same as in v. 20: the plural form of πας.

[87] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 74.

[88] Some of the others are Rom 5:18-19; Rom 11:32; 1 Cor 15:24-28.

[89] See, e.g. Douglas J. Moo, "What Does Paul Teach about Hell?" In *Hell Under Fire* (ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

[90] The view that Paul is referring to good spiritual beings who join in Christ's triumphal procession (e.g. Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities* [SNTSMS 42; Cambridge: University Press, 1981] 61-63; Roy Yates, "Colossians and Gnosis," *JSNT* 27 [1986] 49-50) fits neither the context (e.g., v. 9) nor the imagery of the triumphal procession.

[91] For this view see, e.g. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 74-76; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC; Waco Texas: Word, 1982) 52-57; Aletti, *Colossiens 1:15-20*, 112-13; Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 269. Lars Hartman suggests that Philo, who attributes to the Jewish cult the power to bring harmony in the disorder of creation (*Special Laws* 1.97; 2.188-89; *Moses* 2.133-34; *Dec.* 178), may furnish a partial parallel to Paul's conception ("Universal Reconciliation (Col 1,20)," *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 10 [1985] 109-21).

[92] Ian Barbour notes that the idea of "cosmic redemption" can imply the unbiblical idea that creation is fallen and sinful (*Nature, Human Nature, and God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002] 126).

[93] In light of our conclusions earlier about the OT background to Rom 8:19-22, it is worth noting that the establishing of "peace" is an important theme in Isaiah 24-27 (see 26:3, 12; 27:5). See also, inter alios, Isa 9:7; 52:7; 55:12; 66:12; Jer 30:10; 33:6, 9; 46:27;

Ezek 34:29; 37:26; Mic 5:5; Hag 2:9; Zech 9:10. In contrast, van Kooten thinks that the concept of re-creation in Colossians reflects Stoic and middle Platonic ideas, which the author (not Paul) has used to teach Christ's "absorption" of the powers (*Cosmic Christology,* 110-46).

[94] Walter T. Wilson comments on the *Weltangst* of the first-century Greco-Roman world, to which both Paul and the false teachers might be responding: "It seemed that the universe, in all its vastness and intricacy, was beyond human comprehension or control, being governed instead by a host of wrathful gods and indifferent supernatural powers. Human beings could do little more than struggle against the relentless tide of 'Fate.' For them, personal and material insecurity, not to mention moral and spiritual indeterminacy, characterize the human condition, which often amounts to little more than a fruitless search for meaning that ends with death and oblivion. . . . Often abetting this 'common core' was the belief that the very fabric of the universe suffered from some sort of irreparable rift. The two fundamental realms of reality that make up the universe, the celestial and the terrestrial, are set in opposition to one another on account of some cosmic crisis, variously described" (*The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians* [NovTSup 88; Leiden: Brill, 1997] 3).

[95] Somewhat similar is Thomas Torrance's notion of redemption as a "reordering" of the cosmos, a restoration of the God-given order present in creation (cf. *Divine and Contingent Order* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981] 138; cf. also McGrath, *Nature,* 175-76).

[96] Several scholars suggest, indeed, that Paul's notion of reconciliation here might be at least partially indebted to Greek and Jewish notions of the need for a cessation of the strife that characterizes the world (see Eduard Schweizer, "Versöhnung des Alls (Kol 1,20)," in *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie: Festschrift für Hans Conzelmann zum 60. Geburtstag* [ed. Georg Strecker; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975] 487-501; Hartman, "Universal Reconciliation," 109-21).

[97] The anthropological side is stressed, by e.g. Moyer Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (SNTSMS 119; Cambridge: University Press, 2002); A. Vögtle, *Das Neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1970) 174-83; Reumann, *Creation and New Creation,* 89-98; and, on 2 Cor 5:17, see especially Margaret Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) 421-22; on Gal 6:15, e.g. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 224; Joachim Rohde, *Der Brief der Paulus an die Galater* (THKNT; Berlin: Evangelische, 1989) 276-77.

[98] See, e.g. Reumann, *Creation and New Creation,* 97-98, who points out that "there is no talk here of an apocalyptically renovated cosmos (the grass is not any greener, the sunsets no more colorful than in pagan days)."

[99] The exception is NASB, which appears to be following ASV (cf. also KJV). NRSV changed the RSV "new creature" to "new creation." BDAG translate 2 Cor 5:17 as "new creature" and Gal 6:15 as "new creation."

[100] See Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (AnBib 43; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970).

[101] See, e.g., Ulrich Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und exegetische sStudie zu einem Soteriologischen Grundsatz paulinischer Theologie* (BZNW 56; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989) 48-68; Hubbard, *New Creation*, 12-17; William Webb, *Returning Home: New Covenant and Second Exodus as the Context for 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1* (JSNTSup 85; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 121-25. On Paul's dependence on Isa 65:17-25, see Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 159-60.

[102] G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1," *NTS* 35 (1989) 551-57.

[103] See the summary of Mell (*Neue Schöpfung,* 257): "Der paulinische Begriff kaine ktisis erweist sich als vorpaulinischer konsensbegriff frühjüdischer Eschatologie für das Gottes Initiative vorbehaltene überwältigend-wundervolle futurische Endheil. Der abstrakte Begriff ist in der frühjüdischen Theologie nich einseitig, z.B. kosmologisch, festgelegt, sondern offen für eine soteriologische Füllung. Eine anthropologische und präsentisch-eschatologische Verwendung des Begriffes wie des Motivs der neuen Schöpfung konnte in der frühjüdischen Literatur nicht nachgewiesen werden." For a cosmic application of the language, see, e.g., *1 Enoch* 72:1; *2 Baruch* 32:6; *Jub.* 4:26. In *Joseph and Aseneth* (e.g. 8:10-11), creation language is applied to conversion, but the phrase "new creation" does not occur, and it is not clear that the concept is restricted to conversion. See the survey of Jewish passages in Hubbard, *New Creation,* 26-75. Peter Stuhlmacher also claims that Paul's new creation concept is drawn from Jewish apocalyptic, especially strands of that movement revealed in the Qumran documents, in ultimate dependence on the last part of Isaiah ("Erwägungen zum ontologischen Charakter der *kainē ktisis* bei Paulus," *EvT* 27 [1967] 1-35).

[104] Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986) 152; see also, e.g. Stuhlmacher, "*kainē ktisis* bei Paulus"; Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption,* 143; Webb, *Returning Home,* 126-28; Carl B. Hoch, Jr., *All Things New: The Significance of Newness for Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 155-66; on 2 Cor 5:17, Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) 314-15; on Gal 6:15, James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993) 342-43; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (MeyerK; Göttingen: Vandenoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 282-83. Aune provides an excellent collection of relevant background material (*Revelation 17-22*, 1116-20). See also, on the general theme of inaugurated eschatology in Paul as it relates to this theme, Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 188-89.

[105] In Gal 6:15, the relational aspect is to the fore, since it is the new creation that apparently renders otiose the difference between Jew ("circumcision") and Gentile ("uncircumcision").

[106] Jeremy Cohen provides a history of interpretation of the dominion mandate, showing, among other things, that ancient and medieval interpreters rarely commented on its significance for the world of nature and therefore did use the text to promote rapacity toward the environment (Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989]).

[107] The mandate for humans to rule over "the earth" is explicit in most English versions of Gen 1:26 (e.g., NIV: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock,

over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground.'"). But the reading of the Syriac version (followed in the TNIV quoted above), which substitutes "wild animals" for "earth," should probably be preferred (see also, e.g., NAB). See also Walton (*Genesis,* 132), who argues that humans are to "subdue" the earth and "rule" the animals. Nevertheless, rule over the animal kingdom is almost certainly, by synechdoche, intended to refer to the whole creation.

[108] The verb for "rule over" ("have dominion" in KJV) in vv. 26 and 28 is רדה, which occurs twenty-four other times in the Hebrew Bible. It is applied to a spectrum of relationships, from the oppression of foreign invaders (e.g., Neh 9:28) to the authority exercised by kings (e.g. 1 Kings 4:24; Ps 72:8; 110:2) to the "supervision" of workers carried out by a "foreman" (e.g. 1 Kings 5:30; 9:23). Certainly, contra Ian Hart ("Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Prologue to the Book of Genesis," *TynBul* 46 [1995] 323), the basic sense of the verb cannot be weakened to "manage." The verb for "subdue" in v. 28 is כבשׁ, which occurs fourteen other times in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to the land or a nation being "subdued" under people (e.g. Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1) or to slaves "subdued" under a master (e.g. Jer 34;11, 16). While it can even refer to the violent subjugation, or "violation," of a woman (Est 7:8; cf. HALOT), it does not intrinsically connote violent or oppressive rule.

[109] F. van Dyke, "Beyond Sand County: A Biblical Perspective on Environmental Ethics," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 37, no. 1 (1985) 47; Speth, *Red Sky at Morning,* 20, who quotes Peter Vitousek: "Humanity's dominance of Earth means that we cannot escape responsibility for managing the planet." See also Bruce R. Reichenbach and V. Elving Anderson, *On Behalf of God: A Christian Ethic for Biology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 98.

[110]See, e.g. Hiebert, who emphasizes the close relation in Genesis 2 between אדם ("Adam," "humanity") and the אדמה(the "earth," or, as Hiebert understands it, the "arable land") (*The Yahwist's Landscape,* 32-38). Beisner accuses many evangelical environmentalists of ignoring the effects of the Fall on the earth and minimalizing the role given to humans by God in transforming the earth into a garden. A pristine "good" earth no longer exists; and human beings are rightfully to use all their inventiveness and technology (within the parameters set by God's laws) to "subdue" the earth. "The dominion mandate, properly understood, gives man legitimate authority to subdue and rule the earth, progressively conforming it to his needs and the glory of God. That people do and will rule the earth is unavoidable. *How* they rule it is the crucial question. Will they rule it consistently with the commandments of God's law, or with some secular humanist notions of right and wrong, or with the values of Eastern religions? . . . Biblical dominion is not autonomous, it is theonomous -- restricted by God's law, not man's, and empowered by God's Spirit, not man's" (*Where Garden Meets Wilderness,* 17; cf. 12-23).

[111] Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 61.

[112] Application of the stewardship metaphor to human beings' relationship with nature was popularized by the seventeenth-century theologian Matthew Hale (see Bauckham, "Stewardship and Relationship," 101; Black, *Dominion of Man,* 56-57) and is now ubiquitous in evangelical writing on the environment (Larsen notes that a stewardship model, tending toward servanthood, is a key component of the influential "Au Sable theology" ["God's Gardeners," 40-45]). The final words of the programmatic Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation are: "We make this declaration knowing that until Christ returns to reconcile all things, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's good garden, our earthly home" (the declaration states the philosophy of the umbrella evangelical environmental organization, the Evangelical Environmental Network. It can be found at http://www.creationcare.org/resources/declaration.php).

[113] The closest Greek equivalent to "steward" is οι□κόνομος. The word occurs in parables in which Jesus compares the steward-master relationship to the disciple-God relationship (Luke 12:42-48; 16:1-9) and in summaries of the Christian responsibility to serve (1 Cor 4:1-2; Tit 1:7 [applied to "overseers"]; 1 Pet 4:10).

[114] Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 186.

[115] There is a long-standing debate over whether "image" (Heb. צלם) and "likeness" (Heb. דמ☒ת) are different in meaning in this context. Most modern commentators take them to be basically synonymous, with perhaps the latter guarding against any tendency to think in terms of a physical likeness (e.g. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* [London: SPCK, 1984] 156-57; cf. also Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001] 66-67, who thinks that the latter term may focus on the distinction between God and humanity). It should also be noted that the two words are preceded by different prepositions in the Hebrew (בְּ and כְּ, respectively). A few commentators think that this is significant, suggesting that the first could have a directional idea ("let us create humankind so as to be in our image"). But most Genesis scholars are convinced that they are synonymous in this context (they refer to Gen. 5:3, where the same two Hebrew words for "image" and "likeness" occur, but with the prepositions switched) (e.g. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* [WBC; Waco, Texas: Word, 1987], 28-29; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 145-46). The significance of the image of God concept in the history of theology does not match the frequency of the phrase in the Bible; apart from Genesis 1, "image/likeness of God" language applied to humans is found only in Gen 9:6 (using צלם; LXX ει□κών); Gen 5:1 (using דמות, LXX ει□κών); Gen 5:3 (as in Gen 1:26, using both צלם [LXX ει□κών]and דמות [LXX ο□μοιώσις); 1 Cor 11:7; Col 3:10 (ει□κών); Jas 3:9 (ο□μοιώσις). It is applied to Christ in Col 1:15 and 2 Cor 4:4, and believers are said to be in the process of assuming Christ's own image in Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18 (all using ει□κών).

[116] See the brief surveys in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 33-65 and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 147-55. A biblical and historical survey of views, with emphasis on relations of human beings to nature, is found in Hall, *Imaging God,* 68-181. Jacob Jervell provides the classic analysis of the image of God in Jewish sources (Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den Paulinischen Briefen* [FRLANT 58; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960]).

[117] In a recent survey of OT scholarship, Middleton claims that the connection between "image" and dominion is ubiquitous (J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005) esp. 43-60, 88-90. Similar assessments are found in Josef Scharbert, "Der Mensch als Ebenbild Gottes in der neueren Auslegung von Gen 1:26," in *Weisheit*

Gottes – Weisheit der Welt: Festschrift für Josef Kardinal Ratzinger zum 60. Geburtstag (ed. Walter Baier, et al.; St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987) 1.241-58; Hart, "Genesis 1:1-2:3," 317; and Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (ConBNT 26; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988) 219-23. See also especially Hall, *Imaging God*; also Bernhard Anderson, "Human Dominion over Nature," in *From Creation to New Creation*, 111-31; Gunton, *Christ and Creation,* 100-103; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadephia: Westminster, 1985) 74-79; Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelpia: Fortress, 1974) 159-62; Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 14, 75-88; Hughes, *The True Image,* 61-62; Scobie, *The Ways of our God,* 158-59; C. F. D Moule, *Man and Nature in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964) 2-3; D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynB* 19 (1968); Loren Wilkinson, "Christ as Creator and Redeemer," in *The Environment and the Christian: What Does the New Testament Say About the Environment?* (ed. Calvin DeWitt; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991) 284-89. It is probably going too far to say that the exercise of dominion *is* the image; but the text certainly suggests that one important result or purpose for the image is dominion (see, e.g. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29-32; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972] 60; Waltke, *Genesis*, 66, 69-70; Walton, *Genesis,* 131-32; Victor Hamilton, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-17* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990] 135).

[118] The connection would be explicit if the "dominion" statement expressed the purpose of the image statement: see, e.g., REB: "'let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness, to have dominion over . . .'" (see William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 15-17; John H. Stek, "What Says the Scripture," in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation* [ed. Howard van Till, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990] 252). But this reading of the syntax (taking the ו as introducing a purpose clause), while possible, is not likely.

[119] For this reading of Gen 1:26, see esp. Bernhard Anderson, "Human Dominion Over Nature," in *From Creation to New Creation,* 119-31.

[120] See, e.g. Bray, "God's Image in Man," 195-225.

[121] I follow here the suggestion of Kevin Vanhoozer, that the image involves especially communicative, relational abilities ("Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997] 158-88).

[122] See, e.g., Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 103-8.

[123] Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 184. See also Nash (*Loving Nature*, 119): "Ecologically, sin is the refusal to act in the image of God, as responsible representatives who value and love the host of interdependent creatures in their ecosystems, which the Creator values and loves. It is injustice, the self-centered human inclination to defy God's covenant of justice by grasping more than our due (as individuals, corporate bodies, nations, and a species) and thereby depriving other individuals, corporate bodies, nations, and species of their due. It is breaking the bonds with God and our comrades in creation. It is acting like the owner of creation with absolute property rights. Ecological sin is expressed as the arrogant denial of the creaturely limitations imposed on human ingenuity and technology, a defiant disrespect or a deficient respect for the interdependent relationships of all creatures and their environments established in the covenant of creation, and an anthropocentric abuse of what God has made for frugal use."

[124] E.g., Lampe, "The New Testament Doctrine of *Ktisis*," 457-58; Gnanaken, *God's World,* 103-5.

[125] *Christ and Creation*, 121; idem, "Atonement and the Project of Creation: An Interpretation of Colossians 1:15-23," *Dialog* 35 (1996) 35-41. Note also Bernhard Anderson: "Thus the special status of humankind as the image of God is a call to responsibility, not only in relation to other humans but also in relation to nature. Human dominion is not to be exercised wantonly but wisely and benevolently so that it may be, in some degree, the sign of God's rule over creation" ("Human Dominion Over Nature," in *From Creation to New Creation,* 119-31 [130]). See also Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," 166.

[126] Among them are the implications of Jesus' nature miracles, the teaching about a "restoration [α□ποκατάστασις] of all things" (Acts 3:21; cf. Matt 19:28), the intriguing reference to Jesus being "with the wild animals" (on which see Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals"), and other passages using the word "creation."

[127] See also, e.g. Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (2d ed.; Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia, 1991) 30-32.

[128] Bernhard Anderson refers to the many scholars who have pointed out that the OT focus on creation wards off any attempt to foist on the NT a gnostic-like devaluation of this world ("Creation and New Creation," in *From Creation to New Creation*, 235-36).

[129] In the ESV (see also RSV; NASB), Jesus calls himself "the beginning [α□ρχή] of the creation of God." This is quite likely the correct translation, with "creation" referring to the "new creation" (Beale, *Revelation,* 298-301), but α□ρχή can also mean "source" (see NAB) or "ruler" (see TNIV). See also, possibly, Jas 1:18.

[130] Richard Bauckham, "The Future of Jesus Christ," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 268. See also George Hendry: "The resurrection of Christ is thus the link that binds the consummation of the world to its creation, and the decisive proof of the faithfulness of God. Christians who believe in the resurrection cannot restrict their hope to a future life for themselves; they extend it to the whole created world, which, as it proceeded from God in its entirety in the beginning, will, through his faithfulness, attested in the resurrection, proceed toward him in its entirety at the end." (George S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 216).

[131] Al Truesdale, "Last Things First: The Impact of Eschatology on Ecology," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (1994) 116-20 (118). See also, e.g. Hall: "For unless the fate of this world does matter to Christians, and in a fundamental way, it is futile to expect adherents of this particular belief system to occupy themselves overmuch with the understanding, nurture, and preservation of nonhuman species and of the earth itself" (*Imaging God,* 26; see also Shepard, *Man in the Landscape,* 220). For a brief response to Truesdale from a premillennial environmentalist, see R. S. Beal, Jr., "Can a Premillennialist Consistently Entertain a Concern for the Environment? A Rejoinder to Al Truesdale," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (1994) 173-78.

[132] Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 198.

[133] N. T. Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth* (London: Grove Books, 2003) 22.

[134] While neglecting the "not yet" of God's decisive intervention yet to come, James Dunn nevertheless rightly emphasizes the church's role in the reconciling of nature: it is "by its [the church's] gospel living (1:10) and by its gospel preaching (1:27) that the cosmic goal of reconciled perfection will be achieved" (*The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 103).

[135] See on this, e.g. Gunton, *Christ in Creation,* 126. The attitude that I am warning about is summarized by Rhoads: " . . . if we were able to repent and create a sustainable life together for future generations on the earth, the results will constitute a transformation that might in some sense represent God's salvation for the human race" ("Reading the New Testament," 265).

[136] Van Leeuwen suggests that, since the church is the visible expression of Christ, the church must continue the work of cosmic reconciliation effectively accomplished in Christ ("Christ's Resurrection and Creation's Vindication," 62).

[137] *Pollution and the Death of Man,* 67.

[138] Derr, *Environmental Ethics*, 26-32. Because of this, he concludes, ". . . I think we must be very, very modest in talking about God's intention for nature. Given the centrality of the divine-human drama in Christian faith, given its proclamation of the redemptive event addressed to humankind, I am certainly willing to say -- more than willing, in fact, insistent upon saying -- that our focus must be on human life, and that our task with the earth is to sustain the conditions for human life as far into the future as our wits and strength allow. But I am not willing to go much beyond that." (28).

[139] Speth, *Red Sky at Morning*; the global nature of our current environmental problems and our failure to address them is the heart of his argument.

[140] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 17; cf. also Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (The Bampton Lectures, 1992; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 124.

[141] *Resurrection and Moral Order,* 52; see also van Dyke, "Beyond Sand County," 44.

[142] Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,* 187. Naess also says, "The wisdom of God is ridiculed if He is said to have engaged so ignorant and so ignoble as creature as Homo sapiens to administer or guard the vastness of nature, of which we understand so little." See also the sweeping critique of the stewardship concept in Claire Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics," in *The Earth Beneath,* 67-86; and also Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics,* 129, 80; Bauckham, "Stewardship and Relationship," 100-6; Paul H. Santmire, "Partnership with Nature According to the Scriptures: Beyond the Theology of Stewardship," *Christian Scholars Review* 32 (2003) 381-412. Jonathan R. Wilson, on the other hand, suggests that stewardship language might imply that creation is basically good and thus deny in practice the reality of the Fall and the need of redemption ("Evangelicals and the Environment: A Theological Concern," *Christian Scholar's Review* 28 [1998] 303). Black argues that the stewardship metaphor has been molded throughout history by the changing political and social context (*Dominion of Man,* 58-124; see the summary on p. 118). The ambiguity of the stewardship idea is evident in the insistence of Derr and Beisner that good stewardship of the earth demands extensive use of technology to turn it into the place God intended it to be (Derr, *Environmental Ethics,* 22; Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness,* 17-23). Larsen notes another example: Ronald Reagan's controversial Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, used stewardship language to justify investment in National Park buildings and roads – a program quite the opposite of what most environmentalists using the "stewardship" metaphor would have in mind ("God's Gardeners," 167). For a balanced treatment, defending the theological basis for and practical usefulness of the stewardship metaphor, see Reichenbach/Anderson, *On Behalf of God,* 56-72.

[143] See, e.g., Osborn, *Guardians of Creation,* 129-40. The traditional interpretation of the dominion mandate as a validation for scientific and technological investigation and intervention is therefore justified.

[144]Ron Elsdon, *Green Theology: Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Creation* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992) 65.

[145] Stek, "What Says the Scripture," 260. As ecologists remind us, the natural world is always changing. Determining what changes are "good" for nature and which are not is part of the human stewardship responsibility (see Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* [2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994] 432).

[146] *Reenchantment*, 54.

[147] Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 78. See also Leiss, *The Domination of Nature,* 30-35 (cited earlier).

[148] Soper, *What Is Nature?* 268-69, 269.

[149] As Michael Northcott puts it: "Green consumerism, ecocracy, even environmental protest movements, ultimately cannot succeed in radically changing the direction of modern civilisation so long as they avoid the moral and spiritual vacuum which lies at its heart (*Environment and Christian Ethics*, 312).