

## **The Christian and Ecology**

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### **I. Intro. Environmentalism -- Ecology**

- A. Public issue in 1960's.
- B. 1967 - Lynn White:
  - blamed Christianity for ecological problems:

The Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to 'serve humanity' is the cause of the ecological crisis. Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt.

-- saw solution to ecological problem as religious:

Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.

Do we Christians have anything to say to Lynn White?

### **II. Some Issues in a Christian approach to Ecology**

- A. Evangelicals have focused on:
  - spiritual life/ministry: evangelism, teaching, preaching, discipleship.
  - ethics = private personal piety
- B. Christianity is holistic faith that encompasses all of life: spiritual and material.
  - Christian worldview plagued with spiritual/material dualism.
- C. Secular environmentalists search for a religious basis for ecological concerns.
  - universal ethical claims require a universal basis
  - the problem of values
  - "deep ecology" movement.
    - Christianity has been very mixed in its response
    - Pantheism
- D. Is there a problem? global warming; species extinction, loss of habitat; deforestation; population; depletion/mal-distribution of resources. Some Christians say no.
  - world is for human use, development and consumption
  - premillennialism -- a world destined for destruction
  - environmentalism -- "liberals," democrats, pantheism, New Age.
- E. Can Americans speak?
- G. Does the Bible speak to this issue? Is there a Christian environmentalism?

### **III. The Inherent Value of God's *good* Creation**

- A. Genesis 1:5,10,12,15,21,25,31. "...and God saw that it was good."  
 Good for what?  
 -- useful? for humans? To use, develop, enjoy?  
 -- good in itself.  
     Note that God saw or observed the goodness; he did not impute it.  
 -- The ensemble of creatures possesses intrinsic goodness, value.  
 -- Therefore, this goodness/value is:  
     primary, basic, essential to its existence  
 -- good and useful for humans, and other creatures to use (vs. 22, 28-30).  
     this is secondary
- B. So What?  
 -- Intrinsic/primary value implies moral value which should figure in decisions. (hierarchy of value)  
 -- endangered species, seals

### **IV. God is owner of all.**

- A. Scripture  
 -- Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..."  
 -- Job 41:11b "Everything under heaven belongs to me."  
 -- Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it."  
 -- 1 Cor. 6:19b-20a "You are not your own, you were bought at a price."  
 -- Col. 1:16-17 "...all things were created by him and for him."
- B. If God is the owner, who are we?  
 -- Gen 1:27 -- image of God (representatives) in the world  
 -- Gen 2:15 -- stewards  
 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."  
 -- suzerain and steward -- accountability

### **V. Biodiversity**

- A. Genesis 1:11-12, 20-22, 24-25.  
 B. A joyful symphony of diverse creatures from the hand of God.  
 C. Biodiversity is an intentional inherent characteristic of creation.  
 D. Therefore, as stewards, we should preserve this aspect of our Lord's creation.

### **VI. Additional Concepts drawn from Scripture**

- A. God's covenant with all living creatures (Gen. 9)  
 B. Praise and glory creation brings to God expressed in the Psalms (148)  
 C. Christ, redeemer of all creation, not just humans/human souls (Col. 1:20).

**IV. Conclusion**

- A. Do we have anything to say to Lynn White and others - looking for a religious answer? Yes.
- B. What can you do?
- the need for deeper spirituality
  - prayer, study, evangelism
  - lifestyle, action

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
When riches increase, and men decay.

Thomas Grey