

Ecology and the Canticle of Brother Sun

by Eric Doyle, O.F.M.

In an article published in March 1967, Professor Lynn White of the University of California, argued that the historical roots of the ecological crisis can be traced to the traditional Christian view of man's dominion over nature.¹ Professor White maintained that because the roots of the trouble are largely religious, the remedy must be essentially religious. He suggested that 'the profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction' and he proposed 'Francis as a patron saint for ecologists'.² The article sparked off a good deal of interest. Richard Means, Associate Professor of Sociology at Kalamazoo College, Michigan, took up the point and expressing fundamental agreement with White on the religious aspect of the crisis, put forward pantheism as the basis of a solution.³ While there is a superficial attraction in pantheism as a foundation of the unity of reality,⁴ ultimately it destroys the diversity of creatures through a fusion in the All and it makes change, finitude and even evil, intrinsic to God Himself. Francis A. Schaeffer, Director of L'Abri Fellowship in Huemoz, Switzerland, submitted the proposals of White and Means to a detailed analysis.⁵ In conclusion he rejected both: 'So pantheism is not going to solve our international ecological problem. St Francis's concept, as presented by Lynn White, is not going to solve it—the concept that everything is equal and everything is spiritually autonomous.⁶ Romanticism is no solution because 'firstly, nature, as it now is, is not always benevolent; and secondly, to project our feelings and thoughts into a tree would mean that we would have no base upon which to justify cutting down and using the tree as a shelter for man'.⁷

Schaeffer rejects the 'spiritual autonomy' of nature put forward by Lynn White as the concept of St Francis. I am not sure what White

¹Lynn White, Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, in *Science Magazine*, March 19th, 1967; also in Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man. The Christian View of Ecology*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1972, Appendix I, 70-85.

²*Ibid.*, 85.

³Richard L. Means, *Why Worry About Nature?* in *Saturday Review*, December 2nd, 1967; also so in Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Appendix II, 86-93.

⁴For example, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin felt the temptation of pantheism. However, he contrasts 'the Christian solution' and 'the pantheist solution' and appears to hold an orthodox 'panentheism'; see *Writings in Time of War*, trans. by René Hague, Collins, London 1968, 121-122; *The Phenomenon of Man*, Collins, Fontana Books 1966, 338; *Christianity and Evolution*, Collins, London 1971, 56-75.

⁵*Pollution and the Death of Man*, 1-27.

⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷*Ibid.*, 15.

means by spiritual autonomy. He maintains that St Francis's view of nature and of man 'rested on a unique sort of pan-psychism of all things animate and inanimate, designed for the glorification of their transcendent Creator'.⁸ Perhaps pan-psychism is what he means by spiritual autonomy. In any case, whatever it may mean in this context for White, there is no evidence in the sources for his life that St Francis held any sort of pan-psychism. He was indeed a Christian nature mystic, that is 'one whose mystical experience, whatever form it may take, is based on Christian beliefs and involves an appreciation of Creation as God's handiwork'.⁹ My quibble, however, is not with White (though the primitive Franciscan view was not heretical!) but with Schaeffer. After rejecting all these views, he proceeds to give the genuine biblical view, *the* Christian view, that will serve as a sufficient basis for solving the ecological problem. The view he presents as the authentic biblical and Christian view¹⁰ is, in fact, substantially that of St Francis of Assisi, as a study of his writings and the early Franciscan tradition, as channelled, for example, through the works of St Bonaventure, makes abundantly clear. Schaeffer's approval of the quotation from *The Doors*: 'What have they done to the earth, / What have they done to our fair sister', brings him closer to St Francis than he realised.¹¹ It is a pity that he did not take more care to examine what St Francis's attitude actually was.¹² Had he done so, he would have agreed that St Francis ought to be declared the Patron of Ecology!

The Religious Basis of the Crisis

The ecological crisis cannot be solved merely by a further employment of science and technology. The crisis is a symptom of human selfishness which lurks behind man's every endeavour and achievement. No amount of discussion alone about cybernetics and the future of man can come to terms with the moral issue involved, which concerns the meaning of man and nature and the relation of one to the other. Any effort to prevent further environmental carnage on the sole grounds that we humans are in danger of extinction, without asking ourselves at the same time why it is that nature in itself should be respected and revered, is only a new brand of the very selfishness which has brought us to our present unhappy condition. For this

⁸*Ibid.*, 84.

⁹Edward A. Armstrong, *St Francis: Nature Mystic. The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend*, University of California Press, 1973, 9, 16-17.

¹⁰*Pollution and the Death of Man*, 34-69.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 9.

¹²He makes one very positive reference to St Francis: 'In this sense St Francis's use of the term "brothers" to the birds (he actually calls them "sisters") is not only theologically correct but a thing to be intellectually thought of and practically practised. More, it is to be psychologically felt as I face the tree, the bird, the ant. If this was what *The Doors* had meant when they spoke of "Our Fair Sister", it would be beautiful. Why have orthodox evangelical Christians produced no hymns putting such a beautiful concept in a proper theological setting"—see *ibid.*, 55.

reason, the basic agreement among the authors mentioned on the religious dimension of the ecological crisis, is of far greater import than their disagreement about how it ought to be tackled. Western science and technology are the product of Christian civilisation, which was formed by the Word of God. This has determined our history, our outlook and our thought patterns. Any attempt to answer adequately the question 'What is man?' and to discern the mutual relationship between man and nature (that is, to construct an integral anthropology) will have to include, on the one hand, biological, psychological, sociological, philosophical, artistic and religious-theological dimensions and, on the other, undertake a thorough analysis of what actually happened in the history of the relationship of man and nature, in order to discover whether it is the essence of Christianity that has brought us to the present impasse, or rather, the misuse of the world and a misunderstanding (whether conscious or not) of man's place in nature by Christian men due to human selfishness, which the Christian Gospel is pledged to root out. Such a project cannot be attempted here. It may be asserted, however, without fear of contradiction, that the doctrines of Creation (that all reality originates in a most sovereignly free act of an all-loving God) and Incarnation (that this God became part of created reality which manifests that, from the beginning, matter has had the potentiality of thus expressing God) point to the truth that it is not the essence of Christianity which has brought us to the crisis, but the blind selfishness of Christians, caused by sin, which has prevented them from understanding the full implications of these doctrines and from determining their relationship to nature.

The word 'dominion' in Genesis 1:27 is unfortunate, I think, but we should also notice that it does not mean that nature has no other reason to exist except to serve man. Commenting on this verse, Gerhard von Rad explains: 'because of man's dominion it (the creature) receives again the dignity of belonging to a special domain of God's sovereignty'.¹³ God's sovereignty is one of love for all He has made and therefore even though 'the expressions for the exercise of this dominion are remarkably strong',¹⁴ man is created in His image and so has a vice-regency¹⁵ of love under God, which must not be identified with domination.

Our contention is that it is not the essence of Christianity nor Christian teaching that has brought us to the ecological crisis, but the sinfulness of men (be they Christian or post-Christian) who by mis-

¹³Genesis—A Commentary. Trans. by J. H. Marks, SCM Press Ltd., 1961, 58.

¹⁴Ibid., 58

¹⁵A. R. Peacocke, *Science and the Christian Experiment*, Oxford University Press, 1971, 193: 'It is the exercise of man's powers under God which is the proper destiny of man *vis-à-vis* his environment. Anything else is disaster and leads to the wholesale plunder of natural resources by means of man's enhanced powers for the benefit of a myopic generation . . . Man should be vicegerent not dictator'.

using their God-given stewardship, have arrogated to themselves the sovereign rights of God's dominion over the world. The authentic Christian attitude to nature is exemplified par excellence in St Francis of Assisi who, though not its only representative, is certainly its most famous one. We are not referring to the romantic picture of the Saint, so deeply imprinted in the popular mind, as the Saint who preached to the birds, nor to the image of him projected by such films as *Brother Sun and Sister Moon*. However much he loved nature, St Francis was no innocent, natural mystic who restored the primordial order and peace of paradise. His fundamentally Christian attitude to nature is to be found, not in the *Fioretti*, but in the verses of *The Canticle of Brother Sun*.

Il cantico di Frate Sole

The authorship and authenticity of *The Canticle* are beyond doubt.¹⁶ Verses 1-22 and 32-33 were composed by St Francis at San Damiano between April and May, 1225 on the occasion of a visit to St Clare. During the visit his eye illness, which he had suffered for a number of years, grew worse and he was reduced to almost total blindness. His body was already weak from the Stigmata which he had received on La Verna in September, 1224, and he was suffering terribly from mental agonies. After a mystical experience in which it was promised him that he would attain eternal life, he composed *The Canticle of Brother Sun* and had it sung by brother Pacificus.¹⁷ Some weeks later, on hearing of a feud between the religious and civil authorities of Assisi, he added the verses on forgiveness and suffering (23-26) and ordered *The Canticle* to be sung at a meeting he arranged between the bishop and the *podestà*, together with their followers. The result of his initiative was that they resolved to put aside their grievances when they heard *The Canticle* sung and so Assisi was restored to peace. Verses 27-31 were written shortly before his death which occurred in October, 1226.

Text of *The Canticle of Brother Sun*:¹⁸

- I 1 Most high, all-powerful, good Lord.
- 2 Thine are the praise, the glory and the honour and every blessing.
- II 3 To Thee alone, Most High, they are due,
- 4 and no man is worthy to mention Thee.
- III 5 Be praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,
- 6 above all Sir Brother Sun,
- 7 who is day and by him Thou sheddest light upon us.

¹⁶It is found in all the important primitive sources. See the excellent presentation of the state of scholarship on *The Canticle* in Omer Englebort, *St Francis of Assisi. A Biography*. New Translation by Eve Marie Cooper. Second English Edition revised and augmented, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago Illinois 1965, Appendix VIII: *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, 441-458, cf. also 316-329, 490-491, 542-544.

¹⁷It is also recorded that St Francis composed a melody for *The Canticle*, see *ibid.*, 321.

- IV 8 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
9 of Thee, Most High, he bears the likeness.
- V 10 Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the Stars,
11 in the heavens Thou hast formed them, clear and precious
and beautiful.
- VI 12 Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
13 and through Air and Cloud and fair and all Weather,
14 by which Thou givest nourishment to Thy creatures.
- VII 15 Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water,
16 who is very useful and humble and precious and pure.
- VIII 17 Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
18 by whom Thou lightest up the night,
19 and he is beautiful and merry and vigorous and strong.
- IX 20 Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
21 who sustains and directs us,
22 and produces diverse fruits with coloured flowers and
herbs.
- X 23 Be praised, my Lord, by those who pardon for Thy love,
24 and endure sickness and trials.
- XI 25 Blessed are they who shall endure them in peace,
26 for by Thee, Most High, they shall be crowned.
- XII 27 Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
28 from whom no man living can escape.
- XIII 29 Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
30 Blessed are those whom she will find in Thy most holy
will,
31 for the second death will do them no harm.
- XIV 32 Praise and bless my Lord,
33 and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

¹⁸The translation of *The Canticle* here given is that of the present author. See the thorough textual and literary study by Vittore Branca, *Il Cantico di Frate Sole. Studio delle fonti a testo critico* in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 41 (1948) 3-87. I have followed Branca's presentation of the Italian text (*ibid.*, 82-87) which is as follows:

- I. Altissimo, onnipotente, bon Signore,
tue so le laude, la gloria e l'onore e onne benedizione.
- II. A te solo, Altissimo, se confano
e nullo omo è digno te mentovare.
- III. Laudato sie, mi Signore, cun tutte le tue creature,
spezialmente messer lo frate Sole, 5
lo qual è iorno, e allumini noi per lui.
- IV. Ed ello è bello e radiante cun grande splendore:
de te, Altissimo, porta significazione.
- V. Laudato si, mi Signore, per sora Luna e le Stelle: 10
in cielo l'hai formate clarite e preziose e belle.
- VI. Laudato si, mi Signore, per frate Vento,
e per Aere e Nubilo e Sereno e onne tempo
per lo qual a le tue creature dai sustentamento.
- VII. Laudato si, mi Signore, per sor Aqua, 15
la quale è molto utile e umile e preziosa e casta.
- VIII. Laudato si, mi Signore, per frate Foco,
per lo quale enn'allumini la nocte:
ed ello è bello e iocundo e robusto e forte.

The hymn 'All creatures of our God and King'—W. H. Draper's translation of *Il cantico di Frate Sole*, while undoubtedly well known and very popular, does not do full justice to the intentions of St Francis.¹⁹ The vernacular of *The Canticle* contains many elements proper to the Umbrian dialect, though it cannot be identified with the daily spoken form of this dialect. Its language is more accurately described as a polished and ennobled Umbrian dialect due to the influence of the Latin with which St Francis was familiar, namely that of the Bible and the Liturgy.²⁰ It is at once a beautiful piece of poetry and a prayer of praise to God the Creator. It expresses an essentially religious attitude to nature and contains the authentic Christian outlook on nature. St Francis does not romanticise nature by reading human reactions and qualities into non-rational creatures, precisely because this would be to destroy the value of creatures in themselves by ignoring what they actually are. St Francis loved nature and creatures, that is, he let them be exactly what they are. It is interesting to note that *The Mirror of Perfection* gives another reason why St Francis composed *The Canticle*: 'Whence I wish to make to His praise and to our consolation and to the edification of our neighbour a new Praise of the Creatures of the Lord, which we daily use and without which we cannot live, and in whom the human race much offends their Creator; and we are continually ungrateful for so much grace and benefit, not praising God, the Creator and Giver of all things, as we ought'.²¹ Apart from his sense of gratitude to God for creation, it was also his sadness at man's misuse of creatures that moved him to write *The Canticle*. I will be forgiven the rather gross anachronism in saying that the ecological problem had

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| IX. | Laudato si, mi Signore, per sora nostra matre Terra,
la quale ne sostenta e governa,
e produce diversi fructi con coloriti fiori ed erba. | 20 |
| X. | Laudato si, mi Signore, per quelli che perdonana per lo tuo amore
e sostengo infirmitate e tribulazione. | |
| XI. | Beati quelli che 'l sosterrano in pace,
ca da te, Altissimo, sirano incornati. | 25 |
| XII. | Laudato si, mi Signore, per sora nostra Morte corporale,
de la quale nullo omo vivente po' scampare. | |
| XIII. | Guai a quelli che morrano ne le peccata mortali!
Beati quelli che trovarà ne le tue sanctissime voluntati,
ca la morte seconda no li farà male. | 30 |
| XIV. | Laudate e benedicite mi Signore,
e rengraziate e serviteli cun grande unilitate. | |

The meaning of *per* in lines 10, 12, 15, 17, 20, 23, 27, is hotly disputed among scholars. *Per* may be translated 'for', 'on account of' (cause); 'by' (agent); 'through' (instrument). Thomas of Celano, the Saint's most famous biographer, is the chief source and authority for the 'per-by' thesis; the sources which emanate from Brother Leo and his companions support the 'per-for' thesis—see Englebert, *St Francis*, 442-445. We cannot here enter into the niceties of this controversy. We have translated *per* by the word 'through' in the instrumental sense. One of our reasons for this is the use of *cun* (*con*) in line 5: 'cun tutte le tue creature' which seems to us to be in the instrumental sense.

¹⁹See *New Catholic Hymnal*, Faber Music Ltd., London 1971, n. 2, 2-3.

²⁰Branca, *Il Cantico*, 79.

²¹*The Mirror of Perfection*, chap. C in *The Little Flowers of St Francis* . . . , Everyman's Library 1973, 274.

its influence on the composition of *The Canticle of Brother Sun*! Perhaps the way in which we treat nature reflects our fundamental attitude to one another and vice versa. In any case it is worth noting that St Francis added his lines on forgiveness and suffering to *The Canticle* (he did not write another one) which originally concerned only inanimate creatures.

The poem is deeply mystical in which the author's prime concern is to praise God the Creator; there is no question of worshipping creatures, however we may be inclined to translate *per*.²² The key to the piece lies in the use of the words 'brother' and 'sister'. For St Francis the word 'friar' (brother) is certainly among the most sacred in his vocabulary; one might even say that for St Francis this was a primordial word.²³ Through Brother Christ (he calls Christ a Friar²⁴), the son of Pietro Bernadone was transformed into Little Brother Francis. His love of Christ and his deep reverence for God the Father soon attracted his first companions: Friar Bernard, Friar Giles, Friar Juniper, Friar Leo. Without one word of criticism of the institutions of Church or State, Francis struck at the root of the whole feudal system in providing a viable alternative to medieval privilege by establishing his Gospel Brotherhood. He lays it down that 'they are all to be known as 'Friars Minor' [Little Brothers] without distinction, and they should be prepared to wash one another's feet'.²⁵ From Friar Christ through his human brethren he was led to love Brother Wolf and his sisters the swallows and the hooded larks. His love extended to embrace Brother Fire—who is so strong and lights up the night and Sister Water—so humble and pure and very useful, Sister Moon and Brother Sun. Thus, he was brought back to Him, the Elder Brother and Firstborn of all creation, Who came to cast fire on the earth and to give us waters that well up into springs of eternal life, the Unconquered Sun of justice and only-Begotten of the one Father of heaven and earth. St Francis conceived the whole world as one vast Friary ('Brother'/'Sistry') in which each brother and sister holds a unique and indispensable place. This is no mere romanticism, but a lovely poetic expression of the individuality, the originality, the never-to-be-repeated identity of every creature in nature. It is akin to 'thisness' (*haecceitas*) as Duns Scotus philosophises it²⁶ and to Gerard Manley Hopkins's description of the distinctiveness of things 'in-

²²See n. 18 above.

²³As understood, for example by Karl Rahner, *Priest and Poet*, in *Theological Investigations* III, trans. by Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger, Baltimore and London 1967, 296-302.

²⁴'O quam sanctum et quam dilectum . . . habere talem fratrem qui *posuit animam suam pro ovibus suis* et oravit Patrem pro nobis . . .' *Epistola I, Litterae quas misit omnibus fidelibus in Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assisiensis* . . . , Ad Claras Aquas 1949, 94.

²⁵The Rule of 1221 (*Regula non-bullata*) chap. 6, in *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi*. Translated by Benen Fahy, O.F.M., with introduction and notes by Placid Hermann, O.F.M., London 1964, 37.

²⁶*Reportata Parisiensia* II, d. 12, q. 5, nn. 1, 8, 12, 14 (ed. Vivès XXIII, 25, 29, 31, 32).

scape'.²⁷ Moreover, St Francis emphasises the activity and usefulness of creatures: Brother Sun is the day and gives us light, Sister Moon and the Stars make the heavens fair; God cherishes all creation through Brother Wind, Air and all kinds of weather. Sister Water is not only humble and pure, but precious and useful; Brother Fire is not only beautiful and merry, but he lights up the night and is vigorous and strong. Our Sister, Mother Earth, not only produces lovely flowers, but sustains and guides us. We are in nature's debt, a debt we must acknowledge in order to cooperate with her and to be able to recognise the inherent value of all creatures, animate and inanimate, which have come into being through God's freedom and love. There is not even a hint at forbidding the human use of nature in terms of pan-psychism or animism. Nature has a meaning-in-itself because it is created by God, it does not have its value or meaning purely from man. Man has a duty to respect it and the right to use it by working with it, not by dominating and exploiting it.

Sources and Comparisons

The biblical and liturgical sources of *The Canticle* are obvious. Thomas of Celano already in his *First Life* of St Francis drew attention to its similarity to *The Song of the Three Young Men* in the Book of Daniel and Psalm 148 is a close model.²⁸ Raphael Brown has pointed to an eleventh century hymn, *Jubilemus omnes*, taken from the ancient Roman-French missals, as a possible indirect liturgical source of *The Canticle*.²⁹ This hymn mentions the firmament, the stars, sun, moon, sea, land, hills, plains, deep rivers, air, winds and rain.³⁰ Comparative study manifests that *The Canticle of Brother Sun* is modelled on the rhythm of the Psalms and Canticles with which St Francis was familiar in the liturgical offices of the Church.³¹

If we compare three texts taken respectively from *The Song of the Three Young Men*, *The Canticle of Brother Sun* and the *Hymn to Matter* by Teilhard de Chardin, we find that each expresses a basically identical attitude to nature:

²⁷W. A. M. Peters, *Gerard Manley Hopkins. A Critical Essay towards the understanding of his poetry*, Oxford 1948, 21-28; *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Selected with an Introduction and Notes by W. H. Gardner), Penguin Books, xxiii-xxiv, 224-226.

²⁸See Engelbert, *St. Francis*, 441, for further biblical references.

²⁹I Cel 80: 'For as of old the three children placed in the burning fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify the Creator of the universe, so this man also, full of the spirit of God, ceased not to glorify, praise, and bless in all the elements and creatures, the Creator and Governor of them all', in *The Lives of S. Francis of Assisi by Brother Thomas of Celano*, trans. by A. G. Ferrers Howell, Methuen & Co., London 1908, 78-79.

³⁰Engelbert, *St Francis*, 441.

³¹The text is found in Latin and English in *The Liturgical Year* by Abbot Guanger, O.S.B. Translated from the French by Dom Laurence Shepherd, O.S.B. *Advent*, London 1931, 208.

³¹Branca, *Il Canticco*, 79.

1. All things the Lord has made, bless the Lord ...
Sun and moon! bless the Lord ...
Stars of heaven! bless the Lord ...
Winds! all bless the Lord ...
Everything that grows on the earth! bless the Lord.³²
2. Be praised, my Lord with all Thy creatures
above all Sir Brother Sun ...
Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth.³³
3. Blessed be you, universal matter, immeasurable time,
boundless ether, triple abyss of stars and atoms
and generations: you who by overflowing and
dissolving our narrow standards of measurement
reveal to us the dimensions of God ...
Without you, without your onslaughts, without
your uprootings of us, we should remain
all our lives inert, stagnant, puerile,
ignorant both of ourselves and of God ...³⁴

Each of these cosmic hymns contains a sense of reverence and love for nature and non-rational creatures, as they are and for what they are in themselves. The authors—the first representing the ancient biblical tradition; the second a medieval Christian, a contemplative and poet; the third, a modern Christian, both priest and scientist—are mystics who are able to acknowledge the inherent value and meaning of nature, through their love of God and by their recognition of His sovereign rights over nature as the Lord Creator. Nature is not the product of Fate nor the result of Chance, but the eternally-willed object of God's creative love. The unity of origin in creation gives to all creatures—including man—a certain equality in virtue of which man can invite all creation to praise and bless the one Creator. Even though Teilhard's *Hymn to Matter* comes as a surprise at first (it is perhaps the most mystical of the three pieces), one realises eventually that the entire *Hymn* is conceivable only in terms of God the Creator, a conclusion based on the explicit references to God and the Incarnation in the *Hymn* itself and on the content of the author's other works, especially *Writings in Time of War*. Man, of course, stands at a mid-point in nature, at once immersed in it and beyond it. Through his transcendence man comes to know his own meaning and value and discovers the responsibility he bears to treat nature as nature, no more and no less than that. He is made in the image of God. God knows and loves the animal as an animal, the flower as a

³²Dan 3: 57, 62, 63, 65, 76.

³³See above, lines 5-6, 20.

³⁴Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, Collins London 1965, 68-71.

³⁵93-114, 151-176.

flower and the stone as a stone. Man's obligation is to do precisely the same.

Concluding Remarks

In the end there remains the practical question: What is to be done in the face of the present state of the ecological crisis? Indeed, can anything be done at all? Although the situation is desperate, it is not too late to take more practical measures to control the destruction of the environment, nor are the measures at present being taken useless. Our suggestions here are based on the conviction that we must have a religious world view as the motive force of our practical efforts. Any suggestions to help solve the ecological crisis cannot be considered in isolation, because this crisis is linked intimately to political, economic and social questions over a very wide area. Whatever suggestions are made, however, they will have repercussions at many other levels.

In the first place, someone has to have the courage to tell us and show us as graphically as possible that we must be prepared to make sacrifices, to say 'No' to ourselves, as the only way to combat the greed and selfishness that is at the root of the crisis. Self-denial is an essential part of Christian discipleship and Christians ought to take the leadership in teaching and practising it in its obvious connections with ecology.

Secondly, theologians ought to formulate a theology of creation which includes aesthetic categories in its essential structure, along the lines suggested by Jürgen Moltmann.³⁶ The religious roots of the ecological crisis are tied up as much with our idea of God as they are with our concept of nature. This will involve Christian theology in a much more serious and extensive dialogue with Hinduism and the philosophies of India.³⁷

Thirdly, it is the duty of theologians to work out, with all the resources at their disposal, a theology of the environment as a logical corollary of the theologies of Creation, the Incarnation and the Eucharist and in close liaison with the theologies of aesthetics and leisure.

Fourthly, Christian catechetical instruction from the earliest years should include teaching on the meaning and inherent value of matter and life in all its forms and at every level. This could be achieved most successfully by familiarising the pupils with the authentic Christian attitude to nature as found, for example, in *The Canticle of Brother Sun*.

Fifthly, education at every level—primary, secondary and tertiary—should make it one of its basic aims to restore the sense of wonder at the beauty, mystery and fascinating intricacy of nature. This will

³⁶*Theology and Joy*, SCM Ltd., 1973, 39-64.

³⁷B. Walker, *The Hindu World*, London 1968, 214-216; R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, London 1966, 98-101; H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, Princeton 1951, 570-571, 596-599.

require, firstly, a correction of that fundamentally warped attitude of mind which imagines that understanding comes uniquely through knowledge of practical purposes! Secondly, it will require, communication by shared experiences of the pure enjoyment of nature. This means that school outings, for example, will not be restricted to visits to the British Museum, science exhibitions and art galleries, but will also include visits to lakes, woodlands, farms, hills, moors and rivers and occasional outings to see the sunset.

The Sleeping Lord

by Rene Hague

*The Sleeping Lord*¹ brings together all that has been printed, sporadically, of David Jones's work since *The Anathemata* was published in 1952, except *The Narrows* (in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, Autumn 1973) and *The Kensington Mass* (*Agenda*, special issue, 1974). These nine pieces are described as 'fragments', but the word can hardly be used here in the sense in which it is applied, for example, to the fragments of Ennius (I choose Ennius because that dogged old hexametrists is specially dear to David—what would he not give to have half-a-dozen complete books of Ennius discovered?). There is nothing broken or incomplete in anything that is built into this work. The last piece, it is true, from *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, starts with a ragged edge, but the context is restored and the continuity re-established in a very few lines.

The collection falls into four parts: an introductory poem, *A, a, a, Domine Deus*, which comes close to, but leaves a loophole from, despair; then four sections, *The Wall*, *The Dream of Private Clitus*, *The Fatigue*, and *The Tribune's Visitation*, which have in common (to put it crudely for the moment) an imperial Roman setting; then comes *The Tutelar of the Place*, which may be read as a prayer against the imposition of order at the cost of diversity and personality; and this acts as a natural bridge to the two 'Welsh' sections, *The Hunt* and *The Sleeping Lord*. Finally, *Balaam's Ass*, which comes as an addendum: differing considerably in style, scale, and feeling from the preceding poems, and yet, in spite of its position in the book, serving as a link between David's earliest and latest work.

As I write these words it is borne in upon me that I was wrong, convenient though it was at that moment, to use the word 'collection'; for the eight sections, with the addendum, form a complete whole,

¹*The Sleeping Lord, and other fragments*. By David Jones. Faber & Faber. £2.95.