**Draft chapter: The Theatre of Glory**

‘In the beginning was the Word: without him was not anything made.’

Introduction

Whether we like it or not, the debate about climate change is forcing us to face questions about our relationship as human beings to the rest of ‘nature’. Is ‘nature’ resilient, able to recover from whatever we do to it, so that we are free to exploit it all we need? Or is ‘nature’ very fragile, suffering from our human destructiveness, pushing us to the edge of possible catastrophe? How do questions such as these relate to the Judaeo-Christian tradition of faith, which in some people’s minds is the primary cause of our ecological crisis, and yet for others, is often the source of hope and renewal? This chapter explores different biblical perspectives on these questions, and offers a kaleidoscope of different ‘colours’ from which we can begin to shape some answers.

How we see the world, how we understand ‘nature’, depends on which way we are looking. And ‘nature’ has been looked at in many different ways. For some people in C20th, as Alister McGrath argues[[1]](#footnote-1), ‘nature’ is a mindless force, causing inconvenience – something to be tamed. For others, ‘nature’ means an open-air gymnasium offering leisure and sports facilities. Yet others use the word ‘nature’ to describe a wild wilderness, associated with scuba diving, hiking and hunting. And for others ‘nature’ is a supply-depot producing minerals, water and food to sustain human life. We might add that ‘nature’ can be homely - as in the ‘nature study’ which we used to do in primary school. Or it can be awesome. If you have stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon, you will know that some people’s first reaction is ‘O my God!’ – a sense of the awesomeness and hugeness of nature which dwarfs our sense of human identity. It must tragically and terrifyingly have been the same – though negatively – as in the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004, or on the coast of Japan following the earthquake in 2011.

We do not simply see nature; we see nature ‘as’ something. From within their commitment of faith in God, God’s people have always seen nature *as* ‘God’s Creation’. Nature comes to us as gift from the hand of the Creator. It is from within the community of faith that the psalmist can interpret the glory of the starry heavens as declaring ‘the glory of God’. Or again, ‘The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.’ But having said that, there are a number of different reflections on creation in the biblical narratives, each with their own ‘colour’, providing what I have called a ‘kaleidoscope’ of different perspectives. Each makes its own contribution to the questions being forced on humanity by the environmental crisis we face; each helps us towards a response. All of these perspectives would have been well known to the writer of John’s Gospel. When reflecting on Jesus Christ he recalled Genesis chapter 1 with his opening words: ‘In the beginning was the Word.’

Here are some of the ‘colours’ of Creation.

1. Intimacy and interconnectedness.

One of the earliest stories about the creation of the world is given in Genesis chapter 2. Its colour is of intimacy and interconnectedness. Probably written about the time of King Solomon, it may reflect the importance played in Jerusalem by ‘the king’s garden.’[[2]](#footnote-2) Although ‘God’s garden’, in Eden in the east, is depicted as very forested, maybe the Genesis writer was using the image of the Garden to emphasise the importance of the royal service required to care for the Garden on behalf of the King.

The interconnectedness and interdependence of humanity with the rest of the natural world in God’s garden is one of the themes of Genesis 2 and their fracture through the abandonment of God’s will and God’s ways is depicted in Genesis 3. In contrast to the majesty and mystery of the poem we know as Genesis 1, the tone here is intimate and homely. Adam is made out of the dust of the ground - which we now know to be the dust of dying stars; ‘you are dust and to dust you shall return.’ Humanity is earthed within the rest of the created order, and yet alone among the creatures is addressed by God, charged with the responsibility of royal service (‘to cultivate and to protect’ the garden), enabled to live in relationship, given the capacity for moral choice, can experience shame, guilt, alienation, and knows that he will die. James Barr argued that Genesis 2 and 3 are essentially a reflection on mortality. And I think that is a large part of it. And yet Adam does not die - or at least not physically then. He is clothed by God’s provision, and driven out of the garden for his own protection. But then we find that there are cherubim with flaming swords guarding the way back to the tree of life. What is that about? The tree of life symbolises the life of God – the presence of God in the midst of the garden. The symbolism of the tree appears again in the design of the tabernacle and then of Solomon’s temple. The seven branched candlestick is the tree of life - God’s presence in the midst of God’s temple. But here the cherubim prevent access to that intimacy with God.

In the story told in Genesis 2 and 3, therefore, humanity has an ambiguous role. Through God’s gift, humanity is set in a place of responsibility. Through human choice and human sin, damage is done to the life of God’s garden and the relationships within it. In a world in which creation is fragile and sometimes broken, humanity is protected by God - but humanity is now separated from the tree of life. Access to God’s presence is no longer obvious. The temple in Jerusalem, close to the King’s Garden, itself illustrates the barriers to God’s presence separated off from the court of the Gentiles and the court of Israel, and the court of the priests, and found in the holy of holies where only the high priest can enter but once a year. There is sacredness to God’s creation, but it is not obvious.

Later chapters of the Genesis story continue into strife and violence and separation. The effects of human sin and selfishness on the environment are depicted by C8th prophets such as Isaiah of Jerusalem and Hosea. Isaiah puts it this way:

*The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.*

*Isaiah 24. 4-5*

Genesis 3 leaves us with a broken creation in which the way into God’s presence is barred - or, to use the temple imagery - in which God’s house becomes a market place (Jn 2.16). . When Jesus cleanses the Temple, it becomes again a symbol of God’s presence, which becomes a reality in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Jn 2.20). This is a pointer forwards to the time when the whole of creation celebrates again the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth. Or as Hans Kung put it ‘the kingdom of God is creation healed.’

One of the Christian contributions to the debate about climate change is to promote again a vision of the Creation as the theatre of God’s glory (as Calvin described it). The sense of the presence of God in all things, whose Spirit gives life to all creatures (Psalm 104. 29,30), helps us to recover our sense of the sacredness of the created order. That sense of sacredness is too quickly lost by a technological mind-set, which believes that our ecological problems can simply be corrected by a technical fix, or by an economic philosophy that makes of everything a commodity with a price.

2. Awe and worship.

A different perspective, perhaps written from that same period, is found in the strange book of Job. We may think of the ‘colour’ of Job 38 - 42 as ‘awe and worship’.

After 37 chapters of misery, the Lord at last answers Job out of the whirlwind, and it is not encouraging. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth… when all the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?” Then the poem elaborates the Lord’s presence in the sea and the snow, the rain and the frost, the lions and the ravens, the goats and the wild asses, the ox, the ostrich and the horse, and then Behemoth the hippopotamus and Leviathan the crocodile - even these frightening monsters are part of God’s creation. They were there long before Job, or even humanity, were thought of. Here are the creatures on their own territory – not there for humanity, but in their own right. Each has their own being in God’s purposes. With Leviathan, Job is taken into the watery chaos. There are limits – the earth rests on firm foundations - but there is fierce strength, wild beauty, scavengers and predators, vibrant brutality. Yet God seems to speak with astonishment and appreciation - a proud celebration of nature’s diversity. And where was Job? “Look at Behemoth, which I made, just as I made you” (40.15). Job, too, is part of the intricate web of biodiversity, with humanity interconnected with the creatures of the wild. You, too, are part of the community of creation. And the proper response is awe, humility and worship. Creation points to the Creator.

Lynn White’s famous charge against Christianity that it is the most anthropocentric of all religions[[3]](#footnote-3) and so the cause of our environmental crisis, is true but only to the extent that we have colluded with that aspect of the Enlightenment approach to nature which replaced awe and humility with exploitation and management. The perspective of the Book of Job is to move us from the wildness of creation to the wisdom of the Creator - to hear behind the roar of the lion the voice of God in the whirlwind. Or, to change the key, to see beyond the birds of the air, the Heavenly Father who feeds them; beyond the lilies of the field, the God who clothes them with glory. (Matt. 6. 25ff).

Another contribution Christian theology can make to the debates about climate change is a recovery of a sense of humility. The earth is not there for us to exploit. All the other creatures have their place in God’s economy. Our part, like that of Job, is sometimes to pause in silent wonder and bow down.

3. Futility and despair

The Book of Ecclesiastes has a different colour again: this time resignation at the apparent futility of everything, at times bordering on despair.

This enigmatic book of Qoheleth, the Preacher, is one of the biblical texts that keeps looking down at the frustration of it all. There is not much about God in this book, though The Creator gets a mention in the very last chapter “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth’ (Ecclesiastes 12.1) Why? Because you are getting old and will die, just as this whole creation is dying. But the majority of the book is a depiction of waste and frustration. The author does not engage with the cruelty and apparent wastefulness of the evolutionary process. But he gets close. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What comes around goes around. Everything gets recycled in some way. What is the point of it all?

And yet there are just a couple of glimpses of hope in which the author looks beyond the frustrations of the present to something deeper, something more profound, even more real. God is in heaven, and you are upon earth (Eccles.5.2), he says; yet, ‘he has put eternity into man’s minds’ (Eccles.3.11). That is why the young man is to remember his Creator, and why, eventually, Qoheleth ends in the way he does: ‘The end of the matter: all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments: for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgement.’ In other words, even though everything looks futile and vanity, and as though nothing has meaning under the sun and that nothing ultimately matters at all, the end is this, which we can receive as good news: everything matters - God judges every deed - so fear God and keep his commandments.

Some of this is not so far from that remarkable paragraph in Romans 8.18ff, in which St Paul writes of creation groaning in travail, subjected to futility. And yet on the basis of his gospel, Paul moves much more confidently into hope, waiting for God’s new world to be born. In the centre of the complex theology of grace which he works out in the Epistle to the Romans, and of God’s reconciliation with sinful humanity through Christ, Paul stands back and looks at a broader vista - the whole of creation in God’s purposes. The present world he finds ambiguous - both ‘groaning’ and ‘eager with anticipation’. And his language is of birth - and of a new world coming into being - and that is the basis for his hope. Once again, at the end of the chapter about cosmic resurrection, based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 surprisingly ends with ‘You know that in the Lord, your labour is not in vain.’ Everything matters. Your labour in the Lord will somehow be taken up into God’s new heaven and new earth, when heaven (God’s place) and earth (our place) come together, and God will be all and in all. John’s Gospel has a wonderful image of heaven and earth coming together, recalling the story of Jacob’s Ladder “you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ (Jn 1.51).

There is a great deal about the climate change debate, indeed our wider environmental crisis, that can lead to despair. The sense of the enormity of the task, and the smallness of my contribution, can lead to a sense of hopelessness. There is also fear: what sort of world are we bequeathing to our grandchildren? Yet for the Christian there is no place for despair. Despite all uncertainties, this is God’s world, and hope – rooted in resurrection – can motivate us to transformative action.

4. Joy and Delight

Our motivation is also strengthened by another text from the early period of the monarchy in Israel, namely Proverbs 8. 22-31. This has a brighter colour altogether, the colour of joy and delight.

The Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs is wonderfully free from religion. No priests or scribes; no sacrifices or rituals. Instead a farrago of pithy sayings about relationships and money, wine and work, sex and death, animals, gossip, justice, royalty, language and lethargy. Derek Kidner once called this ‘godliness in working clothes.’ But behind the moral wisdom of the sayings of Proverbs lies a view of the world in which God’s Wisdom can be discerned. She is there with him in the beginning. “I was there beside him, like master worker; and I was daily his delight.’ (Prov.8 30). Wisdom’s world is one of discovery and excitement. Everything is to be explored. And her delight is described in terms of play, just as God seems to enjoy the play of Leviathan in Psalm 104.26. Wisdom’s path is one of delighted discovery, a sense of wonder and enjoyment. Are there echoes of Genesis 2, with the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the evening, just to enjoy the flowers and the breeze? Or of the morning stars singing together and all the heavenly beings shouting for joy (Job. 38 7). This is reminiscent of that wonderful piece from Thomas Traherne:

 *You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. (Centuries, 29).*

 Part of our human responsibility in the care of God’s creation is to safeguard the possibilities of delight for others and ourselves, and future generations. As Gerard Manley Hopkins has it ‘the world is charged with the grandeur of God’. But it needs us to look in the right direction. How we see ‘nature’ depends on the way we are looking.

Earth’s crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God:

But only he who *sees*, takes off his shoes,

The rest will sit around it, and pluck blackberries.

 *Aurora Leigh* Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The Christological poem in the Letter to the Colossians develops the remarkable thought that it is in Christ (who is elsewhere described as God’s Wisdom) that all things in the whole of creation hold together:

‘He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and earth were created…He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together….through him, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.’ (Co. 1.15-20).

Or as the writer to the Ephesians put it: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…with all wisdom and insight he has made known the mystery of his will… to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.’ (Eph.1.3-10).

This is the conclusion of the creative process referred to in the Fourth Gospel so magnificently: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.’ (John 1.1-3).

5. Majesty and order

There are echoes in the opening of the Fourth Gospel, of course, of the wonderful poem that opens the Bible: Genesis chapter 1. The colour of Genesis 1 is predominantly of majesty and order. The faith of this writer reaches beyond the frustrations of the present to discern the goodness of God’s hand in all things. If, as is likely, it was written from the time when God’s people were in exile in Babylon, it gives grounds for comfort and hope to God’s people. All things are ordered; all creatures have their place; you, too, belong within the panorama of God’s purposes for the whole creation, for you are made to be his image, you are to cultivate the earth and exercise responsible care for all the other creatures.

There is a profundity to Genesis 1, which moves from the majesty of God to the mystery of God. It celebrates an emergent creation, (God makes things to make themselves), whose potential is ‘very good’. It tells us that all things are created by God’s Word (‘and God said’). And all creation is animated by God’s spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, moving over the face of the waters. It is by the commanding Word and the animating spirit that all things are upheld. As St Luke records St Paul quoting Athenian poets: It is in God that we ‘live and move and have our being.’ (Acts 17. 28).

The order of Genesis 1 (six days, leading to a seventh, with a rich pattern of emerging life) and its contingence, are not far from the mind of science, in which order and contingence, chance and necessity, are coupled together.

Genesis 1 also suggests the process of creation, as a divine ‘Letting be’. ‘And God said ‘Let there be’. This theme is picked up in Ruth Page’s book about the web of creation[[4]](#footnote-4), suggesting a divine companionship with creation, but with a divine detachment that allows creation to be itself. She goes so far as to suggest that it is entirely fortuitous how things have worked out - whereas Simon Conway Morris[[5]](#footnote-5) and others who speak about evolution’s convergence suggest that the way things are has a certain inevitability about it - which is much nearer to the ‘weak anthropic principle’ (that is the apparent ‘fine-tuning’ of the universe which makes it capable of being our home) many people find convincing. And the divine ‘letting be’ is coupled with the mandate for agriculture (subdue the earth) and for appropriate care of animals (hidden in that difficult word ‘dominion’ – which we look at in a moment).

Whatever the process, the climax of Genesis 1 is Genesis 2.2 - the six days lead to a seventh; creation leads to Sabbath. As William Brown put it, “Sabbath confirms the sufficiency of cosmic and biological organisation… in Sabbath, God releases creation to thrive on its own.” [[6]](#footnote-6)

If, as seems likely, the seven day pattern of Genesis 1 reflects the revelation to Moses about the construction of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus (ch.39-40), and the later construction of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, we are to understand the account of creation in Genesis 1 as depicting the cosmos as a large temple. The six days (six aspects of the tabernacle/temple) lead to a seventh (the Sabbath). Then the editor provides us with the Garden of Eden story as a development of the Holy of Holies – the place of God’s intimate presence with his creatures. In that context, Genesis 1 becomes a liturgical text, and humanity is depicted as being created for worship.

Humanity in the divine image is humanity the worshipper - *homo religiosus*. We are back again to the sacredness of creation, and the God-given role of humanity not only as royal servant, but also as creation’s priest.

That brings us to the difficult text about ‘dominion’ is Genesis 1.26-28. The first task given to God’s image-bearers in this Genesis account is to ‘have dominion’ over other creatures, to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’.

Of course, some people have taken ‘dominion’ and ‘subdue’ to mean ‘exploit as much as you like, without regard for the welfare of other creatures’. Sadly this has sometimes been true of Christians. Many environmentalists are cautious of the Christian church because they assume this is what Christians believe. So we need to be careful with this text. In fact, as Richard Bauckham argues[[7]](#footnote-7), until the rise of modern science, most Christians did not believe that this verse meant that human beings should have total control over the whole world. It was the growth of modern science and technology in the C17th which - though often pioneered by Christian people, and having brought much blessing to the world – led at the same time to the ‘disenchantment’ of nature, and the (wrong) belief that science was about forcing nature to yield her secrets to our human power of exploration.

In the Genesis text, ‘dominion’ is best thought of as ‘ruling’ with the sort of care and compassion that God shows - humanity ‘in royal service’ - taking care of God’s creation on God’s behalf. “Subdue’ is probably best thought of in terms of cultivation and agriculture. The word comes also in Psalm 8, which gives a fuller perspective on its meaning.

Psalm 8 is a song of praise to God the Creator. The poet contemplates the glory of the starry heavens and behind that discerns the glory of God.

The overwhelming nature of the poet’s experience helps him to a right understanding of his own place within God’s creation. The first word about human beings is one of humility before the majesty of God. It is God who now gives to humanity a task of royal service, ‘crowned’ with the authority of God the king (v.5), and given responsibility for the care for created order, described (v.6) as ‘the work of God’s hands’. It is not humanity’s to exploit or damage. The task of ‘dominion’ is that of a commission given by God to exercise God’s ‘rule over’ creation on God’s behalf and in line with God’s will and God’s way. As we saw in Genesis 3: Adam gets it wrong.

Towards the end of John’s Gospel, Mary sees the risen Jesus in the garden on Resurrection Morning. She does not recognise him, but imagines that he must be the gardener. Tom Wright’s comment on this verse is pertinent, referring to the new order which Messiah brings:

 Mary’s intuitive guess, that he must be the gardener, was wrong at one level and right, deeply right, at another. This is the new creation. Jesus is the beginning of it. Remember Pilate ‘Here’s the Man!’. Here he is: the new Adam, the gardener, charged with bringing the chaos of God’s creation into new order, into flower, into fruitfulness. He has come to uproot the thorns and thistles and replace them with blossoms and harvests.’ (*John for Everyone* Part 2.p. 146).

One response to the questions posed for us by climate change, then, must be responsible action as creation’s priest, in care for God’s creation. As Professor Mary Grey wrote, referring to the Operation Noah Declaration *Climate Change and the Purposes of God*[[8]](#footnote-8): ‘For Christians, the themes of this statement - joy, repentance, hope, justice and so on – are not optional: they are at the heart of our identity as Church. We will encounter them in the form of a question when we face God’s judgement: “What did you do to cherish my creation in its hour of danger?”’

6. Expectancy and renewal

The final colour in the kaleidoscope is from the second half of Isaiah. This time the colour is expectancy and renewal.

Nowhere do God’s covenant faithfulness and God’s creative purpose come together more obviously than in Second Isaiah. ‘Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales (Isa 40.12)…The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth’. (40.28). ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I, the God is Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together; that men may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it. ‘ (Isa. 41. 17f.).

‘Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth…who gives breath to the people upon it. I am the Lord, I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations.” (Isa. 42.5f.).

But now thus says the Lord who created you… Fear not for I have redeemed you…you are precious in my eyes…and I love you. (Isa 43. 1f.)

Isaiah speaks of The Creator as the Covenant God of Israel, their redeemer, and God’s coming Servant as the one through whom redemption comes. God is doing a new thing (Isa. 43.19), making a way in the wilderness and pouring water on thirsty land (44.3f.).

 ‘You shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off. (Isa. 55. 12f).

Then in the closing chapters of Isaiah, there is vision of a new heaven and a new earth: the Creator makes all things new:

‘For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping.. they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit… the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy I all my holy mountain, says the Lord.’ (Isa.65.17f).

Here the covenant God, who is creator of heaven and earth, is depicted as ruling over a peaceable kingdom from his holy mountain. This is temple theology again - picked up in its rich imagery in the Book of Revelation which also speaks of a coming new heaven and new earth, as heaven and earth meet in the holy city Jerusalem. It is picked up also by the Second Letter of Peter, where the coming Day of God is described as a ‘new heavens and new earth in which justice dwells’.

Isaiah’s vision is of the Redemption of all people and the whole of creation through God’s Suffering Servant, and establishment of God’s kingdom, where heaven meets earth, where humanity is once more fully in the presence of God. It is there that the Psalmist’s vision becomes reality: ‘ justice and peace embrace’ and God’s glory ‘dwells in our land’.(Ps 85.10,9). It is there that ‘shalom with justice’ finds its fulfilment in the flourishing of all humanity, and the well-being of all God’s creation. It is, as John’s Gospel tells us, Messiah’s gift of peace.

In conclusion:

Here then is a kaleidoscope of colours. They begin to fill out aspects of an answer to the question: how do we see ‘nature’? Taken together the biblical narratives point us to a Creator God, whose Creation is the ‘theatre of God’s glory’ which inspires those who are looking with awe and humility. God creates by Word and Spirit, lets creation be itself within limits, to give delight and provide food. It is to be kept and guarded by humanity as God’s royal servants, creation’s priests. There is much about the ambiguity of the present time which suggests futility and weariness, suffering and struggle, but hidden behind that is the mystery of God’s purpose to sum up everything in Christ. And alongside that is the playful delight of God, the invitation to discover and explore, and invitation to joy, and the call for a just sharing of the rich bounty of God’s earth. The whole story belongs within a narrative of redemption and hope - what Hans Kung calls ‘creation healed’, and what the psalmist calls God’s glory dwelling in our land. That is the basis of our worship and a motivation for our work.

The sense of the presence of God in all things, whose Spirit gives life to all creatures (Psalm 104. 29,30), helps us to recover the sacredness of the created order, and a proper awe and humility, as well as joy and delight. All the other creatures have their place, alongside humanity, in God’s economy. There is a great deal about climate change that can lead to anxiety or fear. Yet for the Christian there is no place for despair. Despite all uncertainties, this is God’s world, and hope – rooted in resurrection – can motivate us to responsible transformative action.

One of the Christian contributions to the debate about climate change then is to promote again a vision of the Creation as the theatre of God’s glory. We are helped in that, as we shall see more fully in a later chapter, by the glory that we see in Jesus, as John’s Gospel depicts him. There is glory at the ordinariness of a village wedding in Cana (Jn 2.) There is glory at the pain of a village grave in Bethany. (Jn 11). And supremely, the word ‘glory’ is the major theme of the second part of John’s Gospel, focussed in the death of Christ on the Cross. Glory through self-giving love. That is one of the messages of this Gospel. It gives us hope in an uncertain climate.

 5516 words

1. Alister McGrath *A Scientific Theology, Volume 1: Nature* T & T Clark 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (cf..the later references in 2 Ki 25.4 and Jer. 39.4; 52.7; quoted in William T. Brown The Seven Pillars of Creation, OUP 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lynn White Jr.,”The historical roots of our ecologic crisis’ , a paper given at the 1966 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ruth Page *God and the Web of Creation* SCM 1996 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Simon Conway Morris *Life’s Solution* Cambridge 2003 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Brown *op.cit*. p. 76 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*, DLT, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ash Wednesday Declaration [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)