

THEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY

- Topic: Created Cocreators and the Environment
Convenor: Joseph A. Bracken, Xavier University, Cincinnati
Presenter: Philip Hefner, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago
Respondent: Greg J. Zuschlag, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Philip Hefner, longtime editor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, titled his presentation "Making Nature Friendly: The Environmental Challenge of the Created Cocreator." It consisted of three parts, summarized as follows: (1) We have no experience of nature that is not mediated by our ideas of nature. R. G. Collingwood made the point that every aspect of our mind and our sensibilities is conditioned by our ideas of nature. He argued that western ideas of nature have changed: from the ancient analogy of nature to mind, through the Renaissance and Enlightenment analogy of nature to a machine, to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries' tendency to see nature as analogous to historical process. A demeaning concept of nature compels us to distance God and our own human identity from nature. (2) The Christian Faith possesses definite ideas of nature and resources for such ideas. The most fundamental of these stems from the creation-out-of-nothing idea, because, insofar as it makes God alone responsible for the creation of the world (in contrast to competing creation myths of the ancient world), it asserts that the nature of nature is conditioned by the nature of God. (3) He proposes that from this Christian tradition we may formulate the idea of "making nature friendly," as a significant idea by which to govern our relationships with nature. Such an idea is both consistent with and required by the idea of nature as conditioned by the nature of God. A personal dimension is thus imputed to nature. A model for interacting with nature thus follows: (a) listening, (b) cooperating, and (c) learning and teaching. Each of these elements is one of mutuality, and the goal is to establish and deepen the "friendship" between nature and humans, as a means for both to commune with the God who is Friend. This model is, moreover, appropriate to Hefner's own concept of human beings as God's created cocreators.

Hefner's respondent, Greg Zuschlag, a Ph.D. candidate at Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, CA, saw Hefner as likewise trying to reconcile opposing camps within the academy and the church on the subject of nature as well as making friends with nature. For example, within science there is the nature vs. nurture dichotomy. Sociobiologists like E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins want to reduce all of nature (including human beings) to purely organic deterministic processes. Cultural constructivists like Clifford Geertz and Judith Butler, on the other hand, claim that nature is reducible to our culturally conditioned ideas about nature. Hefner tries to mediate between these two groups with his notion of biocultural evolution in which nature and nurture are coinvolved both in human evolution and in the evolution of nonhuman nature on this planet. Within

church groups, there is the conflict between Athens and Jerusalem, where reason passes judgment on revelation or vice versa. Hefner mediates between the two by offering a naturalistic explanation of the supernaturalistic doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. For his own contribution, Zuschlag proposed that reconciliation or "at-one-ment" between opposing groups can be best achieved by a mediating third party, e.g., philosophy (e.g., North American pragmatism as represented by Josiah Royce and Charles Sanders Peirce) or ecology and the environmental sciences (above all, if they are informed by pneumatology, a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit).

In the lively discussion that followed, several issues were raised. One participant questioned whether Nature was as friendly to human beings as Hefner seemed to assume. In reply, Hefner claimed that, without underestimating the severity of various natural evils, one should realize that creation is a work in progress, not a finished product. Someone else inquired just how human beings are created cocreators with God. Where is the "causal joint" between the divine and the human? A third respondent noted the pertinence of the doctrine of the Trinity for God's transcendence of and immanence within creation, a point missed by most process-oriented metaphysical schemes. Finally, the hope was expressed that a session on theology and ecology be organized again next year in connection with the convention theme, "Reading the Signs of the Times."

JOSEPH A. BRACKEN
Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio

ESCHATOLOGY

Topic: Is Our Faith in Vain? Meeting Paul's Challenge to the Corinthians
Convener: Jean Liddell, St. John's Seminary
Presenters: Jean Liddell, St. John's Seminary
Anthony Godzieba, Villanova University
Respondent: Leo Lefebure, Fordham University

In the light of this year's theme of *Missio Ad Gentes*, this session addressed the question raised by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, "How can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:12b). Have we as a Catholic community lost sight of the future? Do we teach and preach the resurrection of the dead, or even individual survival after death?

Liddell pointed to Rosemary Radford Ruether's statement that the desire for survival after death is a weakness, tied to male ego. Liddell challenged this assertion. Her paper focused on her work with women survivors of domestic violence to argue for the centrality of self and its survivability after death, a conceivable notion in the light of the Christian belief in the Trinity. Abuse attacks the basic identity of a person, dismantling a sense of self. According to