

The swan offspring of that nebula would flow back and forth across their planet in seasonal migrations. Each spring they would feel a rising impulse to return to the place of their birth. They would cross bays and mountains, prairies and lakes, flying through storms and crystal skies, through day and night, guiding by scents and landscapes, magnetic fields and stars. At the end of their flight they would give birth to new swans, who would carry on that ancient migration.

Indeed, the swans would have inherited this migration from their ultimate parent, the Swan Nebula itself. She too had completed a long migration to reach the place where she could lay her eggs. She had flown all the way across the universe, a migration that began in the Big Bang. This was a migration not just in distance, but also in form. This nebula had travelled through all the phases of cosmic evolution, from the making of quarks to the making of galaxies, through each level of particle building in the Big Bang and atom building in stars. The nebula was still migrating, heading into the next phases of cosmic evolution, into the building of solar systems, of planets, moons, comets, and asteroids; into the building of complex geologies, of ever-shifting tectonic plates, mountain ranges, volcanoes,

oceans, deserts, and arctic ice; into the building of weather systems, from the empty breezes of some planets to the roaring, kaleidoscopic bands and spirals of planets like Jupiter. And then, the nebula would flow into life.

The swans born from that nebula, and the swans and all the life hatched from egg Earth, were the culmination of a great flowing of matter through fifteen billion years, a flowing begun by the Big Bang. The Big Bang had sent stars and planets racing through space like protons in a particle accelerator. The Big Bang had begun this acceleration with real protons and other basic particles, but as they flowed onward they began flowing in more elaborate patterns and assuming more complex forms, becoming stars and planets, lakes and thunderstorms, leaves and the human brain. The Big Bang accelerated raw particles into the grace and love of migrating swans. The Big Bang accelerated particles until they formed an image of the Big Bang accelerating nothing into everything.

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FOCUS ON: RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

CAN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH PROCLAIM THE THIRD COMMANDMENT?

Clive Simmonds

One missing link in ecosophy arguments is the third commandment: thou shalt love the creation of God. Without this commandment the basic tenet of Christianity - thou shalt love - remains incomplete as the key to the understanding and practice of life and living, and of the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation.

In a recent article in *The Trumpeter*, Duncan Taylor has presented an insightful account of his relationship with the world around us and of the possibility of crossing that boundary, if only for a brief moment. He notes that "an ecological view of the world lends itself to the adoption of a set of values in which the boundaries of our morality are increasingly extended outward from ourselves not only to include other human beings..., but also to encompass non-human members of the Earth's biotic community - animals, trees, plants, and ecosystems". This raises the question of who postulates our morality and its boundaries. The traditional answer is that this is the domain of religion. The next question is then: what do Western religions teach? And the answer is that, unlike many other religions and belief systems throughout the world, they define morality as the moral relationship only between God and human beings. The rest of creation is omitted. Christianity does this through its two commandments - thou shalt love God and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But Christianity takes a major step forward by defining love as the only means for moral improvement. Moreover, as Sallie McFague points out, the "as thyself of the second command-

ment affirms the existence of others as that of ourselves; and loving others "as thyself implies willing for others the existence, the right to birth, nurture, and fulfillment that one wills for oneself.

The Christian assertion of the primacy of love denies the Mosaic system of control and justice as the effective means for human improvement, not by demanding its abolition but by enlarging it beyond its original limits. So why does Christianity not extend its moral teaching to include the rest of creation, and how could this be done? Consider the two commandments:

Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy spirit; And thy neighbor as thyself.

The rest of God's creation is not mentioned here. Perhaps Christ did say something more than his reference to the birds, but, if so, it must have meant little to His audience, dominated as they were by their traditions and the realities of the Roman conquest of Judaea.

To clarify this let us perform a systems type of analysis on these two commandments. Such an analysis establishes that there is, in reality, only one commandment:

Thou shalt love.

Given the creation of the sun, the moon, and the rest of the universe, there must surely be three, not two, entities to which love applies: God; one's fellow human beings; and **the rest** of creation.

In that event three commandments are required to make this clear:

Thou shalt love God;
 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;
 Thou shalt love the creation of God.

Now every created being and thing is brought under one umbrella, a conclusion to which Duncan Taylor leads in his paper, and to which **The Trumpeter** is surely dedicated.

This conclusion, happy and realistic as it is, does not completely clear up the situation because it omits reference to the question of justice, and therefore of God's "justice". What of those who deny love in thought, word, and deed, those who preach only justice? This raises the problem of circular definitions, made famous by Descartes' cryptic saying: "Cogito, ergo sum"

Philosophers very soon pointed out that the reverse statement could equally make sense: "Sum, ergo cogito"

These can clearly be written in circular form:

	COGITO		SUM
ERGO	ERGO	ERGO	ERGO
	SUM		COGITO

But which comes first? Does my recognition of existence precede my ability to think; or does my ability to think make me conscious of my existence? Philosophers have not as yet reached a consensus on this question.

Now apply this to the problem of God's love and justice. Since these are, to Westerners, interconnected, we can write similarly:

	LOVE		JUSTICE
ERGO	ERGO	ERGO	ERGO
	JUSTICE		LOVE

But resolution is simpler in this case. Jesus Christ spent His life and death affirming the first alternative: love includes and ultimately engulfs/transcends justice. This teaching is clear to most of us, unless we happen to be theologians or philosophers aware of all the pitfalls in these kinds of definition and argument. God created morality; but before there was human life, there was no morality, no good, no evil, because there was no one and no thing capable of moral behavior. Since God created good as well as evil for the benefit of humankind to enable human beings to praise His creation, is it surprising that, in the long run, in the last days, the good -love- should triumph?

For ecosophers, the third commandment defines what Genesis, Chapter I, Verse 28 means. The phrase "dominion over the fish of the seas. . . upon the earth" has usually been interpreted to mean "power over" or "control over". The definition of "dominion" as authority, sovereignty, control, is widely accepted. Today its effects when practised world-wide without

thought to its consequences require the new interpretation given above by the Third Commandment. We are thus engaged in a mental progression from "power over" to "responsibility for" to "identification with" towards "continuing sustainability", and ultimately to "a sustainable world."

The final step is to ask, how then can God judge human beings? One answer comes from the Buddhists. When a Tibetan dies, appropriate religious and communal ceremonies are held for three days. The departed soul then sets out on a journey up the valley in which he or she has always lived. But, this time, it is different. Along the path lie all the temptations of life; and as the soul makes its way up the valley, it will fall for one of these temptations if it has not reached the state of nirvana. This will determine the level of reincarnation at which it will enter the cycle of life again. But the pure soul will not see the temptations and proceed on up to the col at the head of the valley where it will become part of, and rejoin, the universe from which it originally came.

The teaching is plain and simple: given the chance, human beings can, and will, judge themselves. There is no need for a vengeful god to vent its failures on an unruly humanity.

This Buddhist picture needs to be translated into Christian terms. At death the soul becomes aware that it is in the presence of God. For the baptized, confirmed, or "born-again" Christian this poses no problems. It is only necessary to call on the Lord Jesus Christ Who has promised to act as mediator and cleanse that soul of its sins. However, for the soul which has ignored, rejected, or never heard the Christian message, the situation is different. As the door of Heaven begins to open, God's light shines down on to the soul, making it aware of what it might have been, but did not become, during its lifetime; and, as the door opens further, a conflict arises within that soul and intensifies; and it is this realization of what one might have been versus what one has been that creates what we call "hell". No judge condemns; there are no torturers, no flames, no divine holocaust. (We must remember that the younger generation has seen real life pictures as well as full scale color TV and movies of holocausts, and knows what a nuclear explosion is and does.)

But all the time the door is open and the opportunity to turn to God is there, and one by one the "lost" souls finally turn. In the end none can resist the love of God since it is inconceivable to affirm that the power of the Creator is limited and that His love cannot ultimately bring in the worst sinner to repentance. Only one is left - Satan, the embodiment of evil.

Every 12 year old child knows what will happen then. Since God has the largest and best computer, all that He has to do is to press the delete key, and Satan will vanish? No, just as the computer goes blank and your text is lost, so the whole notion of good and evil, and of the human race created to demonstrate it and its effects will vanish also; and the Eternal will be left unchanged, as it was in the beginning, now and ever shall be!

So why all this talk about morality, people and Nature? Two reasons: the official choice of materialism since World War II by Western nations (usually described as economic growth), and the "de-volution" of morality into legality thereafter, led to the inevitable impacts on Nature and the environment we now call the environmental crisis. As an example of the devolution of morality into legality consider that the Minister of Finance in Canada decided, apparently on his own, that marriage and co-