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THE
DOCTRINE OF CREATION
AND THE
ETHICS OF LIFE AND DEATH.

A.D. Matthews.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of M.Litt.

Awarded the degree of M.A

October, 1985.



30. APR. 1987

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A.D. Matthews.

The doctrine of creation and the ethics of life and death.

Theology is a way of construing the world and in doing so it develops suitable concepts and models to interpret experience. Moral theology establishes the moral notions and moral behaviour appropriate for those who profess certain beliefs about God. The doctrine of creation enables the believer to discern the world as the work of God and to interpret the world theistically. Our increased knowledge of the world, and of man's development within it, will not permit an anthropocentric interpretation of the world, and man can make no monopolistic claim to the world which he must share with other animals.

The doctrine of creation is concerned with the nature of man, but it does not have an easy connection with talk of 'natural law' and 'natural rights.' The use of 'rights' language has not been useful in connection with abortion and euthanasia because of inconsistencies in the understanding of 'human being' and 'person'. The doctrine of creation emphasises man's radical dependence and contingency, consequently theology must be concerned with the issues of life and death and the treatment of 'persons' on the edges of life.

A moral theology associated with the doctrine of creation must recognise that persons are worthy of respect; not to respect them is to lose coherence between belief and action. The doctrine of creation, as the story of God's dealings with man, has a 'high' view of life and of persons, demanding respect for others. It must judge adversely those actions which compromise that respect. No claim will be made that easy or ready-made answers can be given, but the doctrine of creation appeals for humility in the face of mystery and a denial of the delusion of mastery over creation.

The Doctrine of Creation and the Ethics of Life and Death.

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I. The doctrine of creation.

1. Introduction.

The doctrine of creation has occupied an important, but sometimes implicit, place in Christian theology. If it is granted that the task of theology is to interpret experiences and then to 'form these into a coherent framework by elaborating suitable concepts or models as a basis for future actions and experiences,'¹ then the doctrine of creation has an important role to play in this interpretative function. As Hodgson put it, 'I submit that a genuine doctrine of creation is more able than its rivals....to assimilate the actual facts of our experience.'²

There are significant differences between science and theology, but theology, holding to a doctrine of creation, must take seriously the results of scientific investigations, without being restricted to one aspect of scientific dogmatism. Just as the Old Testament theologians interpreted the myths which they inherited in the light of their contemporary teaching, so must theologians in our own time engage in the task of reinterpretation. And Moltmann,³ for example, has argued that the doctrine of creation needs to be revised in the light of modern exegesis of the biblical texts and of our experience of and dealings with nature. In particular, it is the task of theology to interpret the facts and values theistically. This might involve the recognition



that the statement of the doctrine of creation is not merely a cognitive statement, if it is that, but an assertion of meaning, for 'to assert the creatorship of God is the traditional expression of attitude which we take up when we say that the universe is not meaningless.'⁴ So for Macquarrie, the doctrine of creation is important because it expresses a question which is not an 'academic' one, 'but one that has profound consequences for the practical business of living.'⁵ And Hefner has coined the suggestive phrase, 'how to live optimally'.⁶ Therefore, the doctrine of creation needs to be clarified and the connection between holding to belief in that doctrine and action explored, without too much emphasis upon the anthropocentrism that can so often mar the dogmatic presentation of the doctrine of creation.

2. Creation in the Old Testament.

Most considerations of the doctrine of creation start (and even end) with a study of creation in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and in particular, its roots in the Old Testament. Important though this is, there is much more that needs to be done to establish the meaning and function of the doctrine of creation. For often the biblical tradition is understood as a series of cognitive statements without a real concern for the nature of the material, expecting that the traditions will provide immediate answers to questions concerning the doctrine of creation. Rogerson,⁷ for instance, has given an important caveat against a simplistic approach to the literature of the Old Testament. He warns that it would be unwise to regard the Old Testament as monolithic or homogeneous, or even to consider 'the Israelites' as a recognizable entity. It is doubtful whether the writers represented in the Old Testament were expressing a majority view. If they spoke for the whole nation there would have been no need for the prophets to have exposed apostasy in the nation. It has to be recognised that the Old Testament writings represent only a part of the consciousness of the nation as a whole.

Furthermore, to start a consideration of creation in the Old Testament with Genesis 1 and 2 is probably an example of a mistake which will lead to distortion

because Genesis 1 and 2 represent only a part of the Old Testament's awareness of nature. Although Eichrodt has been taken to task by Rogerson for his unclear use of the term 'Israelites', he does show an awareness (which is not, however, developed) that the whole of experience must be considered:

'...to the Israelites was revealed the universal power of the one God, who, by virtue of his living breath made the multiplicity of the world both dependent upon and related to himself, without thereby depriving it of its life or debasing it to the level of an inanimate machine.'⁸

The Old Testament literature shows an almost 'Wordsworthian' awareness of the natural world within which man finds himself; the created things of this world are not cast aside as 'material' as opposed to 'spiritual', and on the other hand there is no unrestrained emotional praise of an idealised nature. But nature, in the sense of the things that are experienced, is given its true value under God. This awareness is to be seen in the apparently casual references to and analogies drawn from nature. For example:

'Even the stork in the sky
 knows the appropriate season;
 turtledove, swallow, crane
 observe their time of migration.' (Jer. 8.7) (JB)

And Isaiah, with the economy of language that comes from acute observation, speaks of,

'..the clear heat produced by light
like a dewy mist in the heat of harvest'.(Is.18.4)

The speeches of Yahweh in the Book of Job, 'the greatest and most comprehensive account of natural phenomena which the Old Testament affords',⁹ intend to show that the lesson of nature is that the ways of God are inscrutable. In his discussion of Job 38, the philosopher Otto wrote:

'In the last resort, it relies on something quite different from anything that can be exhaustively rendered in rational concepts, namely, on the sheer absolute wondrousness that transcends thought, on the "mysterium", presented in its pure non-rational form. All the glorious examples from nature speak very plainly in this sense.'¹⁰

The descriptions of particular objects are intended to show that nature is full of mysteries which are beyond man's attainment, mysteries which point to a divine activity that is beyond man's comprehension. Job may observe and wonder at the extent of God's creation, but he may not fully comprehend it. Peacocke, whose initial training was in the biological sciences, has aptly commented on this passage:

'The Book of Job....urges emphatically that man's whole attitude to the created order is wrong-headedly egoistic and anthropocentric, for it is clear....that the greater part of creation is of no relevance to man at all.'¹¹

As it will become more obvious later, the realisation of

mystery at the heart of creation is an integral part of Peacocke's presentation of the doctrine of creation; and his criticism of man's attitude applies quite often to well-meaning theological presentations of the doctrine of creation.

In Psalm 104 the poet shows in co-ordinated presentation the dwelling of Yahweh, the immovable earth, and the waters that once covered the earth(vv.7,8,9). It is not the incomprehensible mystery of these things in the catalogue of nature that attracts the eye of the poet, but the harmonious order which rules them all; there is purpose and order in the sequence of sun and moon, night and day(vv. 19,20,22,23). It is emphasised that the created order is dependent upon its creator; the animals and man depend upon God for their food, and even for their very existence. It was God who gave them the 'breath' that makes them living beings, and it is he who can take it away, and then nature returns to the dust of non-existence (v.29). The poet, on the basis of his experience, gives expression to the contingency of things (although he would not have used the term). Psalm 104 was probably an attempt to make the world appear a less threatening place by seeing all things as being under the control of God. This is an important insight into the meaning of the doctrine of creation. Westermann points out that the Old Testament does not speak of belief in God as Creator, and the reason for this, he says, is obvious:

'...for the man of the Old Testament it was not possible that the world could have originated in any other way. Creation was not an article of faith because there was simply no alternative.'¹²

To the Hebrew mind, as expressed in the biblical tradition, the world is a fact; it is there and it is experienced, but it has not always been there. Contemplation of his own life and the lives of things about him suggested to the poet that things had not always existed, nor had they come about of their own accord: they had been created. Psalm 104 represents a religious interpretation of the natural world, an interpretation that was not given along with ordinary perception of the world. In such a way the experience of the world is interpreted in terms of faith in God.

It is generally recognised that the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 are myths and that it is important to understand the nature of myth. According to McKenzie, 'Myth deals with the relations between the divine and the human....Myth formulates in an acceptable way that which man recognises but cannot define.'¹³ Myths are extended symbols and it is the nature of a symbol that that which it is intended to communicate is not directly experienced or adequately expressed by the symbol. In his extensive study, Symbolism and Belief, Bevan examined the origin and development of symbols in religion and argued that the primary experience

is man's experience of his environment. And so, with McKenzie, one might say that 'the myths of creation more clearly speak of the beginning of the world of experience than they speak of an absolute beginning from nothing.'¹⁴ Westermann makes a similar point when he writes that the creation narratives in Genesis are not concerned with a philosophical problem about origins:

'It was not the philosopher inquiring about his origins that spoke in the creation narratives; it was a man threatened by his surroundings. The background was existential, not a philosophical problem.'¹⁵

The significance of the existential interpretation of creation will be considered below(pp.47f).

In Genesis 1 and 2, as in Psalm 104, there is no theogony and matter has no independent existence. All things are subject to God; and all things exist because God wills that they should - that is the implication of the word of command. The absence of a theogony is significant, because it 'proves that there is no place in Yahwism for any such idea. The world has a beginning, God has none.'¹⁶ There is no necessity why God should create man, who is wholly dependent on God for his existence, and this is symbolised by the fact that at the beginning of the narrative in Genesis 2.4ff the picture is of an arid, waterless state.

There is no clear indication of 'creatio ex nihilo', only that there exists a chaos and God creates

the world, everything, out of this formless stuff. But this chaos is not antithetic to God as in the ancient mythologies; but rather the created order is the anti-thesis of chaos. The existence of pre-creation chaos does not detract from the sovereignty of God, since it becomes subject to God, in Jaki's words, 'everything is fully dependent on him and the dictum "creatio ex nihilo" will merely reveal the very fulness of that dependence.'¹⁷ The concept of chaos may have had some meaning in the ancient mythologies, but 'the representation has lost its mythological character entirely and is no more than a survival, not yet abandoned because at that time complete nothingness could not yet be conceived.'¹⁸

In many religious traditions the origin of the world and of the gods takes an important place in mythology and worship. All religions seem to consider their principal god to be the creator. But it is generally argued that the presentation of creation in the Old Testament was a late phenomenon in the religious thought of Israel, resulting from interaction with the mythologies of Babylonia during the period of the Exile. This reckoning is probably too late. It is not necessary to go into detail here, suffice it to say that it can be argued¹⁹ that the concept of creation by God came about as a result of conflict between faith in one God and the indigenous fertility cults in Canaan. The prophets were involved in a life and death struggle, and they expressed an alternative myth in which the God who is revealed in

the orderliness and trustworthiness of the natural order is the same God of the Covenant.

It has been fashionable to find in Genesis 1 and 2 a clue to, even the justification for, man's exploitation of the natural order.²⁰ The roots of this exploitation are said to be in two phrases, 'in the image of God', and 'to have dominion'. Barr has examined the text closely and he has shown that the framework of Genesis 1 is intended to show that man is man when he is in his place in nature. The dominion that man has is not defined, but it is more a mark of leadership or stewardship rather than of exploitation. The authority that man has is a sort of delegated authority from God. The dominion is not that of a tyrant, but of a king who is responsible for his kingdom. Barr rejects the identification of dominion with being 'in the image of God':

'The point was not that man had a likeness to God through acting as God's representative towards the rest of created nature, but that he himself was like God. In what way...was not stated; probably it was essential to the writer's position that it could not be stated.'²¹

And it must be observed that amongst the followers of the tradition of which Genesis is a part exploitation was not the norm. The codes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy express concern for the earth and for animals. Moreover, account must be taken of the sense of oneness with all creatures

taught by Francis of Assisi and by Benedict, whose symbiotic communities fostered a balanced interplay with natural cycles which increased fertility.²²

It is important to recognise that the opening chapters of Genesis are in the form of myth, thus it cannot be said, with Schmaus, that these opening chapters 'present a particularly detailed account of the world's derivation from God.'²³ It is not possible to claim that these passages describe what happened.²⁴ It is necessary for Christian theology to form a 'modus vivendi' or working relationship with the special sciences, but that cannot be achieved on this basis which retains a lingering fundamentalism misrepresenting the nature of the biblical material and failing to do justice to the nature of myth. A more acceptable assessment of the significance of the Genesis narratives is that offered by Peacocke, who states that here we have '...the awareness man has of the mystery of his own individual existence... and of the realisation that there is nothing necessary about our existence.'²⁵ This assessment shows a sensitivity towards the biblical literature and it will allow the formation of a working relationship with the special sciences, as will be shown in Chapter 6.

3. Creation in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, as might be expected, there is a continuity of ideas with the Old Testament with regard to creation. God's works reveal the power and divinity of their Creator, so that Paul can write, 'Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity, however invisible, have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made' (Romans 1.20). In general, in the New Testament the created world is understood to be the setting for God's dealings with man. What have New Testament theologians made of the biblical tradition of creation? For instance, Lampe has written that 'It is in God's self-disclosure in his mighty act of redemption by Christ that Christian belief about creation is grounded.'²⁶ Lampe's presentation of creation in the New Testament is influenced by what one might call a 'covenant view' of the Old Testament tradition, that is, the belief in creation is dependent upon Israel's experience of God in the historical events interpreted by the covenant, and so any new creation is 'brought about by God's establishment of a new relationship between man and himself.'²⁷

According to Ehrhardt, there is no clear idea of creation in the New Testament.²⁸ However, Lampe argues that

'...through knowing God to be the author of redemption and of the covenant which made

Israel a people dedicated to his service, they came to the belief that the God who sustained and renewed their life and restored what had been overthrown must also be the original source of all life.'²⁹

As we have already seen in chapter 2 it must be questioned whether this sequence is likely or whether this is a religious interpretation imposed on popular experience. It becomes clear why Lampe has chosen this 'covenant' interpretation of the Old Testament traditions, for he wishes to emphasise the presentation in the New Testament of Jesus as redeemer and then to draw a contrast between the old covenant and the new, the old creation and the new:

'In the New Testament Christ, the agent of the new creation which springs from the redemption effected by his incarnation, death and resurrection, is recognised to be the lord of all life.'³⁰

The schema is neat, but it is doubtful whether the interpretation does justice to the varied underlying strands of the Old Testament literature or indeed of the New Testament.

Certainly Lampe is correct to draw attention to a new factor in the New Testament presentation of the doctrine of creation: the place of Christ within the scheme. It is a matter of some surprise to realise that 'the prophet Jesus of Nazareth should within thirty years of his death have become worshipped as the Lord of

identical with the Law of Moses (24.23), and 'this means that the divine Wisdom, a cosmic entity, is sent by God himself to a particular place on earth and at the same time takes the form of the Law entrusted to Israel on Sinai.'³³ For Philo, Wisdom played a similar role as the plan or instrument with which God created the world. In the Wisdom of Solomon Wisdom is given cosmic significance as 'a breath of the power of God', or 'a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty', a 'reflection of his eternal light', and the 'image of his perfect goodness'. Here we find statements and images that are applied to Jesus in Hebrews, Colossians and 2 Corinthians.

A great variety of names was applied to Wisdom in the Wisdom literature and to the Logos by Philo, and, Hengel cautions, such variety should make us wary of postulating independent and 'indeed conflicting Christologies with different communities standing behind each.'³⁴ Another strand is that in the Old Testament 'name' is a theological concept used as a manifestation of Yahweh, and the expression came to mean the power by which God accomplishes his work. In 1 Enoch there is a passage which speaks of the 'secret Name uttered in the oath' (69.4). The secret of the oath is that 'by it the heaven was suspended before the world was created to all eternity. And by this oath the deeps were established' (69.16-19). In 1 Enoch the Name and the Oath appear as instruments of God in creation. The Name plays the same role as Logos in Philo, indeed Philo uses

the Name as one of the alternative titles of the Logos. At Qumran an important place was given to the Name as an expression of the power of Yahweh. In the Fourth Gospel there is the theological elaboration in which the Name has come to designate Christ, for example 17.5,6. There is a unity of nature between Father and Son expressed here, and Dodd commented:

'If the Name of God is the symbol of his true nature, then the revelation of the Name which Christ gives is the unity of Father and Son to which he bears witness.'³⁵

But the author of the Fourth Gospel preferred the term Logos to Name, probably because it was of wider relevance to his readers, both Greek and Jew.

The pre-existence of the Logos or Christ and his involvement in creation are connected with the sending of the Son into the world. It is probable that these ideas were developed among those Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who were driven out of Jerusalem, and yet Paul used such expressions as though they were already established in both form and usage. It is doubtful whether such expressions were the result of pagan influence, because the original missionaries were themselves Jews. Another important group consisted of the 'God-fearers', who had been associated with Judaism before they had adopted a new faith. Their religious thought was strongly influenced by the thought and language of Judaism. If Jesus was proclaimed as God's Son, and as his mediator, this

called into question the status of other intermediary figures, either angels or Wisdom/Torah. Reconsideration of the previous mediators of salvation and the elevation of Jesus as the mediator of salvation led to a distinction between Judaism and the emergent Church.

Once Jesus was proclaimed the mediator of salvation there was an interest in the beginnings. The pre-existence of the eschatological redeemer could be read out of such passages as Micah 5.1 and Psalm 110.3. In 1 Enoch the Son of man is said to have been chosen by God before the creation of the world. His name is said to have existed before the creation of the world; and this corresponds to the pre-existence of the name of the messiah in Rabbinic sources. The sending of the Son presupposes a descent from the heavenly sphere, humiliation and incarnation as is expressed in Philippians 2, and there may be an analogy with the Wisdom hymn in Ecclesiasticus 24. The acknowledgement of Jesus as the mediator of salvation attracted to it the functions of Wisdom as the mediator of salvation and of creation. The functions of Wisdom were transferred to Jesus, as Colossians 2.3 suggests. In this way the uniqueness and finality of God's revelation in Jesus were expressed. Just as he is involved in the eschatological judgement of the world, so he accomplishes the creation at God's command. In this regard the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel is 'the only logical conclusion of the fusion of the pre-existent Son of God with traditional Wisdom.'³⁶ If this is so, then the Prologue is

not to be derived from Gnosticism, but from the context of Judaism and Christianity.

In the Prologue the relationship between the Word and God is so described that the Word is set alongside God. Although John's language gave rise to speculation in the Christology of the early Church, John is not concerned with speculation. He makes the point that what is said of the Word makes clear the unique relationship between Jesus and God. The man Jesus is the embodiment of God's own action. The Creator has appeared in Jesus, speaking and acting in him(1.11,14), thus, 'The Prologue is of decisive importance for the foundation of the concept of creation through the Logos.'³⁷ Elsewhere it is maintained that in Jesus the word of God is uttered (2 Cor. 1.19; Heb.1.2). In the Jewish tradition 'the word' was accepted as the means of creation and also as the force which preserves and sustains the universe. But the Word in the Fourth Gospel is not merely used in the same sense, the Word is the pre-existent Christ and Son of God who is in a unique relationship with the Father.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is described as the 'image' of God, and this expression was adopted from the Wisdom tradition of Greek-speaking Judaism. The Son 'reflects the glory of God'(1.3), and he can be said to uphold the universe, an affirmation which recalls the terminology applied to Wisdom. The concept of 'image' also aroused associations between the pre-existent Christ

and the figure of the first Adam, who, in Philo, is identical with the Logos.

Paul did not regard Christ as the first Adam of Genesis 2, but as the heavenly Adam who, as a 'life-giving spirit', overcomes death (2 Cor. 4.4; Col. 1.15). If Christ is identified with the 'image of God', that means that he was of the divine nature, and this is expressed in the opening of the hymn in Philipians 2. The significance of this passage is that Jesus is not simply the righteous man, chosen by God, but the divine mediator who gave up his heavenly role and took on human form and human destiny which led to a shameful death on the cross. Indeed, it has been argued that the first attempts in Christology were not in the form of speculative prose, but in hymns which quickly acquired the status of sacred texts by being read in the liturgical context.

In the presentation of Christ in Colossians 1.15ff, Paul moved from the historical to the cosmic in his interpretation of the events. There are three main statements in this presentation: first, Christ is the mediator of creation; secondly, in him all things are held together; and thirdly, all things move to him as their goal. His function as creator is conditioned by his achievement as Saviour, if it can be expressed in this proleptic way. We predicate pre-existence to Christ only as a result, or as an inference from, what we already know of him as the risen mediator of salvation.

When Paul wrote of the pre-existence of the Son, it must be recognised that although he was following a concept of Hellenistic Judaism, he was also responding to Christ as Lord and in the same way he, as a Jew, responded to God. His radical monotheism was not compromised by the acknowledgement of two Lords, but rather he was using 'the mythical conception of the Son's belonging eternally to the Father.'³⁸ So that when Paul spoke of the Son's actions and words he was speaking of the actions and words of God.³⁹ It was the expression of his belief that God is encountered in Jesus Christ. Paul's concern was with faith and not with speculation; he was concerned to express the belief that Jesus, who is the eternal Son of God, came from God, and has returned to God and has brought salvation.

The statement in 1 Cor.8.6, 'There is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist...', probably represents one of the earliest formulations of faith, and here the Son shares in God's work of creation. It is an attempt to establish the identity between the Father and the Son, and so to avoid the charge of blasphemy or ditheism. The pattern that is being followed is that of the function of the Torah or Wisdom as the means of creation, not as separate entities alongside God, but as an aspect or personification of the same divine reality.

The ascription is made as an inference from Jesus as the mediator of salvation.

In the Letter to the Ephesians there are references to the cosmic position of Christ. The statement, he was chosen 'before the foundation of the world'(1.4), and the concept of 'anakephaleiosis'(1.10) presuppose his presence at and the cause of creation. But these ideas find their clearest expression in Colossians 1.15-18; the beloved Son is 'the first-born of creation' and this priority in creation places him with the Creator himself (1.16). The expression, 'in him', was influenced by the language associated with Wisdom. It has been suggested that Paul adopted this terminology in order to counteract the semi-Gnostic heresy at Colossae.⁴⁰ Thus the expression 'in him' means that God planned the world according to the ideal image which is the Son. The process was like that which took place in Hellenistic Judaism to find a mediator for a transcendent God, so that the intermediaries in Judaism - Wisdom and Torah - are replaced by Jesus, just as in the Fourth Gospel Jesus replaces the other institutions of Judaism.

Most of the uses of the phrase 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' appear to have arisen in the context of worship. And Barbour has suggested that it was also in worship that the experience of renewal arose, and therefore the early Christians came to focus their thoughts on the mediatorship of Christ in creation. If in

their experience they came to see a new life, then the agent of this new life, this new creation, must be none other than the agent of the first creation, namely, the Wisdom of God. Thus Barbour observes:

'...the whole eschatological context of early Christianity, with its sense of the fulfilment of God's purposes and of the universal Lordship of Christ, must have provided some impetus for the assertion of the primacy and the activity of Christ in creation.'⁴¹

In its earliest use the concept of Wisdom expressed a desire to understand. There was a desire to be assured that Israel and the righteous were in the purposes of God, and then to link this with God's plan for the world. It could thus be said that one of the functions of Wisdom was that of overcoming the meaninglessness of events and fear of a hostile world. This was the precedent for the use of Wisdom-categories as applied to Christ, for here was the assurance that the present hostile world was not beyond the control of God. Barbour usefully remarks:

'What is new with Christianity is the realisation that because the last things were upon them, and were what they were, therefore the first things must have been thus also - through Christ.'⁴²

There is a continuity, for the task of Wisdom was to re-assert God's original purpose and restore what had been distorted, and the new creation takes place through Christ.

We may conclude that many of the expressions used of Jesus in the New Testament are

influenced by the imagery of Hellenistic Judaism, and that this use was Christological and not cosmological in intention. It must be recognised that the language used has a transience and an opacity. An event of great significance needed to be explained or at least comprehended, and there was an urgent need to find the necessary images or symbols for the task. The obvious source of those images and symbols was the cultural milieu of the members of the early Christian community. Whilst these images and symbols were used in the context of Jewish Christianity there was little likelihood that they would be misunderstood. But beyond this context there was the danger that these images and symbols would become opaque and that they would be interpreted in terms of Greek philosophy, that is, that they would become hypostases and their original force and character would be lost. This precipitates a further problem: To postulate an intermediary in creation on the implied grounds that the world is inferior and untouchable by a superior, transcendent God is to harm the interconnectedness between God and the world. To this problem we now turn.

4. Creation in the early Church.

The early Church proclaimed Jesus as the Word made flesh, God in man. But such claims sounded hollow, even objectionable, to those who regarded the created order with considerable scepticism and distaste. The development of Gnostic systems, presenting an anti-cosmic doctrine of redemption in the form of mythical spiritualism, became a real threat to the Christian understanding of redemption:

'Gnosticism's pessimistic ideology of creation and dualistic concept of redemption forced orthodoxy to ground the doctrine of creation more firmly in revealed truth.'⁴³

The challenge was taken up by Irenaeus, who showed that there was a unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and at the same time showed that God the Creator is also God the Redeemer, and both acts - creation and redemption - are part of the divine purpose.

A plan of redemption presupposes the absolute sovereignty of God. Irenaeus struck at the root of the Gnostic idea of God who has nothing to do with creation; he went on to show the absurdity of supposing that God has no power over a certain realm of being; for if God is impotent in regard to reality then that reality must be regarded as divine. This argues against the eternity of matter and Irenaeus used this to prove creation from nothing.

Irenaeus' achievement was the re-casting of the Hebrew myth of creation. The statement of beginnings in Genesis is a prologue to the history of Israel, rather than a speculation about the beginnings of man and of the world. The essence of the Hebrew myth was the dependence of the world and the nation of Israel on God. Irenaeus realised the challenge of Greek philosophy to the myth and to Christian theology. That challenge consisted in pessimism and a denigration of the natural world. More explicitly, the challenges came from dualism and pantheism.

Dualism asserted that there were 'archai' - or first principles of reality - that were responsible for the existence of the world. God, however, is so transcendent that he could have had nothing to do with the creation of the world; but a monotheistic faith could have nothing to do with the existence of other principles of reality alongside God. A moral dualism asserted that the world was inferior to a heavenly realm and therefore was to be escaped from. But this was contrary to the experience of the Israelites and Christians for whom events in this world were of great significance and for whom this world has the possibility of good. Pantheism tried to identify the world and God; instead of elevating the world, it led, in fact, to a denigration of the world. It was in response to challenges such as these that Irenaeus developed a doctrine of 'creatio ex nihilo'.

The Gnostics' pessimism led them to assert that God had nothing to do with this world. The creation of the world was the work of subordinate beings. But Irenaeus showed that this is a contradiction of the belief in the omnipotence of God, for that before which God is powerless is, by definition, greater than God and therefore God. Furthermore, whatever God may do with the world as the basic stuff of creation, he is not the creator of that basic stuff, because he is not the cause and origin of it. Against this, Irenaeus argued that 'there is nothing above or after him' (Adv.Haer. 2.I.1). Nor is God influenced by any other and he created of his own free will. If God is the 'fulness' of all, there cannot possibly be any above him (Adv.Haer. 2.I.4).

 / If God is the Creator then there is no need to postulate the existence of the angels who effected the creation, according to the heretics, for God as Creator must also have been the creator of the angels. God has no need of further intermediaries since he had with him the Word and the Spirit, 'by whom and in whom freely and spontaneously he made all things' (Adv.Haer. 4.XX.1). The world cannot be regarded as an aberration for which the evil angels were responsible, as the Gnostics maintained, for then the angels would have been more powerful than God and that would then mean that God is not omnipotent and, by definition, not God (Adv.Haer. 2.II.1). This negative statement is at the same time a positive statement

of the inherent goodness of the world.

Irenaeus argued that the matter from which the creation was formed must itself have been made and made from nothing, because it is only from God as Creator that creation can originate and because there is nothing greater than God and nothing equal to him. This is the importance of the assertion of 'creatio ex nihilo'. The doctrine also guarded against pantheism because it established a difference between God and the world, and because the origin of the world is with God who is good; the doctrine also established the inherent goodness of the world, consequently the world, having its origin in God, is not to be denigrated.

Irenaeus did not leave the matter there. He later went on to argue that the creation reveals the one who made it (Adv.Haer. 2.IX.1). In doing so he used the analogy of man's making:

'While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point pre-eminently superior to men, that he himself called into being the substance of his creation, when previously it had no existence.' (Adv.Haer. 2.X.4)

In other words, the analogy from man's making to God's making is inadequate because it leaves aside the radical disjunction between man and God.

The world as man experiences it is not always good, it has much evil and so the inherent goodness

of the world is not obvious. This can give rise to pessimism like that of the Gnostics, believing that it was impossible for a good God to have been involved in the creation of a world that is evil. But Irenaeus observed that man's view of the world is inadequate and limited; man looks at the individual components of the world, rather than at creation as a whole, that perspective is the prerogative of God, not of man. A person does not judge a piece of music from the individual notes that comprise the piece, but from the harmony of the whole(Adv.Haer.2:XX.2).

Irenaeus' formulation of the doctrine of creation from nothing is not concerned with a placing of an ultimate beginning to the creation, but to bring out the implications of the Old Testament presentation of creation. It stresses the dependence of the created world upon God, its contingency; it re-states the inherent goodness of the world in opposition to the pessimism that a partial view of the world can produce; it draws attention to the power of God and his freedom in creating the world; and it draws a distinction between man and God, for God's creating is radically different from man's making. Most important, the Christian understanding of creation is preserved from dualism, moral and metaphysical, and from pantheism.

5. The doctrine of creation and natural theology.

The doctrine of 'creatio ex nihilo' necessarily entails that the world does not exist independently of God; it implies that it is brought into existence by God; and that before it existed there was nothing except God. The concept also implies that the world came into existence as an act of the divine will and that same will chooses that it should continue in existence. The world is contingent, because it rests upon the unconditioned will of God.

Ward has recently argued⁴⁴ that the creation of the world is an act of self-limitation by God. It is an act of divine self-giving in which God puts himself at the disposal of his creatures and limits himself in relation to them. This is a way of reconciling divine omnipotence and the freedom of creatures. Sixty years ago Tennant had argued a similar position with regard to an understanding of the existence of evil.⁴⁵ The theological significance of the doctrine of creation is not primarily concerned with the beginning, whether in time or out of time, the significance lies in the contingency of the world, and creation is a continuous act.⁴⁶

There has been a tension between natural theology and theology based on revelation. It is axiomatic in natural theology that knowledge of God can be gained from knowledge, understanding, and contemplation of the world. The awareness of the world as contingent or as

ordered can lead, it is claimed, to an awareness of God as constant, dependable, and 'orderer'. But natural theology has been given a rough ride by those who would base theology solely upon revelation. For example, Torrance has rejected the possibility of gaining knowledge of God by means of natural theology or from knowledge of the world. Our knowledge of God, he claims, is gained from the actuality of historical events and in particular the historical events of Jesus.⁴⁷

Tennant, a great advocate of natural theology argued against relying upon revelation alone. For Tennant, the important presupposition is that the divine purpose is moral and there is moral growth in man. Revelation would be a contradiction of that purpose because it would be an invasion of ethical freedom and personality.⁴⁸ If information is to be imparted to man, that information cannot be conveyed by divine omnipotence because 'human receptivity and assimilation are involved.'⁴⁹ The information cannot be thrust upon man ready-made, nor received in any other way but by insight and response. Revelation implies an infallible utterance, and that in turn requires both an infallible recipient and an infallible utterer. Any assumption of coercion in the transmission of the message is offensive to ethical theism in which 'the ethical dignity of free human personality is as fundamental a truth as is the self-revealing nature of God.'⁵⁰

To deny the possibility of gaining knowledge of God from his works is to denigrate the creation as the work of God and thereby a denigration of the Creator. It is true that the created order is ambiguous and that the message it contains is to be found and looked for; but the same can be said of events. Not all events are significant, at least not obviously so; history is the interpretation of events that do not contain their ready-made significance. To ignore the world as a possible means of revelation or of understanding the Creator implies a 'weak' belief in God as Creator.

In his Systematic Theology Kaufman adopts an 'historicist approach', that is, talk of God must begin with the historical events through which God has made himself known.⁵¹ This approach, he maintains, is superior to an approach based upon natural theology, which he regards as 'misguided'. The historical events that are determinative are those associated with Jesus, and all our concepts of God, such as Lord and Creator, must be modified with reference to Jesus.⁵² From these events he infers that God is Lord of history and that events are under his control and that that control is personal, in the sense of having some purpose.

But it is not clear how Kaufman uses the terms, 'history' and 'historical'. 'History' might refer to the sequence of all events, or to the selection and interpretation of some events as having some significance.

History-as-events does not come with the meaning of those events ready-made; those events have an ambiguity and their meaning has to be discerned in the light of other events or in terms of another frame of reference which is extrinsic to the sequence of events. History, no less than the natural world, can be interpreted theistically or atheistically.

The symbol of 'creator', according to Kaufman, is a symbol drawn from human experience. The analogy which Kaufman prefers is drawn from a work of art which is unrepeatable and unpredictable. What Kaufman is anxious to preserve is the essential otherness that obtains between creator and creature; there must be no confusion between them. It is implicit in the concept of creator that the creator has the freedom to create and thus is not dependent upon anything.⁵³

Kaufman makes the important observation that if God is Creator, then our lives can have no purpose except as being the creatures that God intends us to be. There are important ethical implications here. But the observation does give rise to a question: Is this purpose to be discerned by means of an examination of the created order, or is it to be deduced solely from revelation? In each case the deduction is arbitrary; there is no inherent reason why revelation should be regarded as the more accurate, unless one has decided, on the basis of other reasons, to accord to revelation a certain authority.

As Tennant observed, revelation requires an infallible receptivity on the part of man,⁵⁴ and that, on the basis of human experience, is a doubtful proposition.

For Kaufman, creation is not a mystical expression for the relationship between the finite and the infinite.⁵⁵ Creation is a symbol in which beginning is used analogically rather than literally.⁵⁶ But this is to use the term 'creator' in an attenuated form, for if the Creator is not concerned with the beginning it is difficult to see how the other things that Kaufman wishes to predicate of God as Creator are possible. For example, how could God's purposes be expressed in creation if God were not the originator of that which reveals his purposes ?

Our knowledge of the world must be interpreted in theological terms; that is an important theological task. Kaufman argues that the theological mode of interpretation must in turn be derived from the historical person-event of Jesus:

'It is of the first importance that what we say about God be rooted in the historical person-event Jesus Christ. The characteristic images by means of which this event is apprehended historically are to be regarded as defining images for grasping the ultimate reality with which we have to do.'⁵⁷

And so Kaufman establishes three aspects of this interpretation: order, goodness, and beauty. These aspects are deduced from the nature of God as revealed in the historical person-event of Jesus. Each of these aspects

has an ethical implication. First, if the world is good, then there should be a reverence for all being.⁵⁸ Second, if the world has order, then man has an obligation to use his mind to comprehend it:

'The inanimate as well as the organic world is God's creation and has its place within his purposes; as such it is to be honoured and respected, neither wantonly exploited nor deliberately defaced or destroyed. One who acknowledges God as Creator of the finite order must seek to live with a certain awe and respect toward all creation, giving every creature its due, reviling none.'⁵⁹

Third, God might be expected to create beauty and so man has an ethical duty not to produce ugliness which would be a denial of the glory of God.⁶⁰

Leaving aside the considerable problems involved in using such terms as 'beauty' and 'ugliness', the ethical implications of goodness are well said. But it does not, however, fit well with other statements in Kaufman's book. For earlier he had made the claim that the significance of all life is the provision of an environment for man. This anthropocentric view does not sit well with a call to show reverence for all being. It sounds more like self-interest, rather than a disinterested respect for all being.

Reference has already been made to Barr's careful exegesis of Genesis 1 and 2 in which he denied the charge that this passage has caused or encouraged

a tyrannical abuse of nature.⁶¹ (Indeed, Ehrenfeldt⁶² has shown that the abuse of nature owes more to the 'arrogance of humanism'.) Unfortunately, Kaufman's interpretation of the doctrine of creation with its anthropocentric bias would provide good evidence for the accusation.

Later, Kaufman makes the claim that changes may be needed in the cosmos before it becomes a proper setting in which persons might find 'authentic fulfilment' and become a suitable home for personal beings.⁶³ Even if we overlook the cant-laden cliché of 'authentic fulfilment', this statement suggests a staggering narrowness of vision with its assumption that the attainment of man's fulfilment should be the purpose of creation, and at the same time it places a serious limitation upon the intents and concerns of the Creator. It seems to be unwarranted arrogance for man to suppose that the created order should serve him and his ends. We may be able to conceptualise and to verbalise the experience of God, but that does not entail that the rest of creation is insignificant, except in so far as it forms man's environment. Such a claim provokes the question: Is God the Creator of all things or only of man? And if we were to interpret the doctrine of creation in this way, it will not provide a basis for a serious moral concern for the whole of being, but only a concern for that part of creation which is of immediate interest for man. Conceived in this way, the doctrine of creation, which will then be only a partial

understanding of the world and of man's place in it, will not help man to 'live optimally'.

When the scope of the theological enterprise is limited, then the total vision becomes limited. The task of theology is to interpret experience theistically, and not simply a part of experience. To limit theological interpretation to some historical events (however important those events) is to limit the scope of theological understanding and to reduce the importance of the belief in God the Creator. Our experience is not primarily historical, unless this term is limited to refer only to the individual's personal history, and it is doubtful whether this is the meaning intended when historical events are referred to as being revelatory. Our primary experience is one of wonder, awe, and beauty, and there is some truth in the claim that 'We are artists - of a sort - before we are thinkers and moralists; and before we have begun to speculate or manipulate we have been thrilled by the beauty that surrounds us.'⁶⁴ The world is known to us through emotion and aesthetic appreciation; and it is worth remembering, as in Job 38, that the world's beauty exists without reference to man.

The doctrine of creation rests upon a sense of contingency, of temporality and of something greater than ourselves. Revelation, wrote Tennant, is not the handing down of some truth, but

'...the manifestation of God, in and through

the world and mankind, to man, who is thereby enabled to discover by his own rational insight and moral experience the purpose and the nature of God.'⁶⁵

A man's knowledge of the world is mediated by his body which is part of the physicality of the world; this awareness can lead to a sense of interconnectedness between man and the world in an organic whole grounded in God.⁶⁶

The sociologist, P. Berger, makes a distinction between 'inductive faith' and 'deductive faith'. By the former he means a process of thought in religion that takes its starting-point in human experience; and by the latter he means a process which begins with certain assumptions that cannot be tested by experience, and these assumptions concern divine revelation:

'Put simply, inductive faith moves from human experience to statements about God, deductive faith moves from statements about God to interpretations of human experience.'⁶⁷

In his defence of natural theology, The Openness of Being, Mascall welcomes the insight of Berger on this point. Theology, Mascall argues, does not deal with two separate orders of reality, the natural and the transcendent, but seeks to understand the inter-relationship between them.

Natural theology is undervalued in neo-orthodox theology where emphasis is placed upon the individual's response to the Word of God revealed in Scripture. The assumption that this is the only way to

come to know God leaves a significant aspect of human experience and personality out of the picture. Christianity proclaims the 'whole man', and it is therefore contradictory to deny a part of man that makes him whole and deny access to God by means of a constituent part of the personality, namely, man's emotional and aesthetic responses.

Advances in the special sciences, it is often argued, have made natural theology impossible, because these advances have been made on the assumption that the world is autonomous. It is Kaufman's opinion that 'such an approach is both irrelevant to the situation of the modern man and theologically misguided.'⁶⁸ The basic assumption of the world's autonomy may no longer be regarded as a truism, since it carries with it a view of science which belongs to the nineteenth century rather than to the twentieth century. The advances in the natural sciences do not make natural theology, properly understood, any less relevant, indeed, they may make such an understanding more relevant. If man's experience is a part of himself and makes him what he is, then a process of thought that takes that experience into account is hardly irrelevant. Kaufman advocates that we 'must begin with historical events...through which God has made himself known.'⁶⁹ Historical events are no less ambiguous than events in nature and the findings of scientific investigations.

There is a place for natural theology which sets out from experiences and works inductively. Such

a natural theology would be an interpretation of experience, and as Kaufman has written elsewhere:

'A concept of God is a means by which man gives ultimate metaphysical significance to the moral and personal side of his being, for it involves doctrines which interpret reality as moral and personal in character.'⁷⁰

It has already been observed that this outlook and approach are to be found in the Old Testament tradition.

In the last one hundred years the extent of man's understanding of his environment has grown and in consequence his perspective has changed. The natural sciences have been concerned with the origin and development of the physical and biological world. Sensitive to the recent developments in science, Peacocke has written that this changed perspective 'should have altered our attitude to the natural surroundings which human minds appear to transcend as subjects.'⁷¹ One change that should have taken place is in the way in which man represents the world, since it is 'no longer a kind of stage for the enactment of the human drama.'⁷² And yet this is the way in which the world is represented in some theological thinking of creation. The world is said to be the locus of man's history or for man's use. Of course, such statements could be no more than a statement of an obvious truth, but the ways in which such statements are used tend to show that they are value judgements concerning the world. The anthropocentrism implied in them is

staggering, even to the extent of suggesting that God's concern is only for man. In Peacocke's view, the perspective should be one in which man shares with other things in his familiar environment common molecular structures, and

'Although this continuity of man with the organic world has sometimes been accepted in principle, it was not before the last century that the scientific evidence for man's relation to other species began to appear.'⁷³

If the tension in theology between natural theology and theology derived from revelation is resolved in favour of revelation, the doctrine of creation becomes less relevant, and one consequence is that there is little conflict with the findings of the natural sciences. But if theology regards the doctrine of creation with more seriousness, the findings of scientific investigation are of significance for an expression of that doctrine. Therefore, we now turn to the inter-relationship between science and religion.

6. The doctrine of creation and science.

When the tension between natural theology and the theology of revelation is resolved in favour of the theology of revelation the outcome can be a situation in which there is little conflict between religion and science, because religion and science can be regarded as barely compatible realms of discourse and an 'uneasy truce'⁷⁴ can be formed. In this truce it can be agreed that the sciences speak of the physical realm as its proper concern, and religion can speak of its proper realm, namely, the spiritual and moral concerns, consequently in neo-orthodoxy statements concerning creation are interpreted existentially.

Christian theology has traditionally not restricted itself to statements about the spiritual realm, rather it has wanted to speak also of the world of immediate experience; and the doctrine of creation has had more than an existential purpose. Both science and religion are speaking of the same world and even if the language used in each sphere of discourse may differ and their purposes diverge, theology cannot afford to ignore science.

The doctrine of creation has maintained that the world is what it is through the deliberate will of God and that its continuing existence is an act of God's love. At the same time, Christians have held that the world exists on its own and develops according to its

inherent regularities. One of the consequences of scientific thinking has been the recognition that the representations of nature in the biblical literature and in theological doctrine have been influenced by pictures of the universe and of the natural order which must now be regarded as outmoded. To defend the expressions of the idea of creation out of deference either to tradition or to a literalist interpretation of Scripture is to confuse the medium with the message, that is to say, that creation is dependent upon God. It is an important achievement of scientific thinking to present a picture of the past history of the physical universe and of man's place within it.

In the light of the increased knowledge of the physical realm, Whitehouse posed the question: 'Can God the Father, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, be thought of as Lord and Creator of the universe revealed to us in science?'⁷⁵ His answer is positive and he draws attention to the limitations of science when dealing with religion, and to the reluctance on the part of theology to submit all its statements to the scrutiny of science. It is fundamental to theology that it should be determined by the knowledge of God, that is, 'of a reality which differs radically from the knowledge which engages the mind through natural phenomena.'⁷⁶ The judgement of theology has been that God is transcendent and transcendence cannot be known by means of the procedures that have brought

so much success in scientific thinking. It is a 'colossal assumption which has so far failed to vindicate itself'⁷⁷ to suppose that the criteria for belief can be settled by means of appeal to the criteria of scientific thinking.

In his little book, Nature and God, Birch made an attempt to remove the bogey of science from religious thought. It was his aim to show that there was no contradiction between the findings of science and faith in God as Creator, so that a positive answer could be given to Whitehouse's question. Birch argued that science has revealed more of God at work in his creation, and so he maintains that 'the doctrine of creation affirms that man and the world reveal the nature of the divine activity which is their ground of being.'⁷⁸ But it is a recurrent problem whether the world reveals anything, or whether man interprets his experience of the world in the light of other beliefs in order to make sense of the complex experiences within his physical context. Birch went on to claim that the doctrine of creation 'stands for the sacredness of things.'⁷⁹ But it is doubtful whether this has been the traditional understanding of the doctrine of creation; indeed, it has been an important strand in the biblical tradition and in theology that the world is not sacred and that it has no inherent sanctity. The stories of Genesis 1 and 2, for example, have been shown to have had a 'de-sacralising' intention. From the way in which Birch continues it appears that he does not

intend to use the term 'sacred' in a strong sense, but only in the weaker sense of having some intrinsic value under God, for he writes:

'If we could recapture its meaning, the effect could be profound. A world bent on obliterating and exploiting nature for its pleasures might come again to a sense of deep concern wherever the opposite influence of destruction and devaluation holds sway.'⁸⁰

The intention is good; but there is an ambiguity in the use of 'world' and 'nature': they are used in opposition. By 'world' he really means 'all men'; yet if there are only a few who do not share the view that he condemns the statement is false. To write instead 'some people' would emasculate the rhetoric. The warning against the abuse of the natural world is timely, but the statement seeks to persuade emotionally and not rationally, and there is, moreover, a certain 'puritanism' in the condemnation of 'pleasures', for not all exploitation, either now or in the past, has been in the pursuit of pleasure. Birch argues for a continuity between man and the rest of the created order; but he does not do this, as one might have expected from a molecular biologist, on the basis of common molecular structures nor on the basis that all are the works of God; instead he uses the unusual argument that 'the universe has both an outer mechanical aspect and an inner aspect which is akin to mind. This involves the idea that men and all entities are experiencers.'⁸¹ Later, he states that at the heart of the electron is

'feeling', 'this is not to assert that such entities are conscious. The word feeling is used as an analogy to conscious feeling, but not to mean conscious feeling.'⁸²

Unfortunately, Birch does not go on to explain what he does mean in his use of the term, and it has to be admitted that his attempt to accommodate process theology fails.

In his sympathetic study of the relationship between science and religion, Barbour analysed three approaches to creation: the neo-orthodox, the existentialist, and the linguistic analytic. And he discusses each of them critically. In neo-orthodoxy the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 are not regarded as history, but as a symbolic expression of religious truths which are quite different from the statements of evolutionary theory. According to this view, the doctrine of creation has nothing to do with the origin of the world in time, it is concerned only with the extra-temporal relationship between God and the world. The neo-orthodox view of creation is based on the understanding of God and human existence revealed in Christ, and there are four aspects to the understanding of creation: (1) God is sovereign and transcendent; (2) God is free and purposeful; (3) the world is real and orderly; and (4) the world is essentially good. According to Barbour, the consequence of the neo-orthodox view of creation is that 'it leads to a radical separation of scientific and religious questions...

The doctrine excludes no scientific theories; it excludes only alternative interpretative theories.'⁸³

The existentialist interpretation of the doctrine of creation is confined to the meaning of creation within the present personal confession, and it excludes all reference to the actions of God in space and time. For example, in Bultmann's interpretation of creation

'The affirmation that God is creator cannot be a theoretical statement about God as "creator mundi" in a general sense. The affirmation can only be a personal confession that I understand myself to be a creature which owes its existence to God. It cannot be made as a neutral statement, but only as a thanksgiving and surrender.'⁸⁴

It is the consequence of the existentialist view that it by-passes the problem of God's relationship to nature.

The linguistic analytic view maintains that language about creation is not language about origins, but is an expression and evocation of 'a distinctive orientation toward God and the world. The creation is an imaginative vision or picture that encourages distinctive attitudes towards the world.'⁸⁵ Evans, for example, argues that biblical language about creation is always self-involving, that is, the speaker does not give assent to a proposition, but declares an attitude. Barbour observes that 'this focus on the human attitudes which

religious language expresses leads to the abandonment of propositional assertions about God or the world.⁸⁶

Each of these approaches leaves out of consideration two features which have been part of the traditional concept of creation: first, creation is a divine activity; and second, creation is the bringing into being. In their place Barbour suggests the notion of continuing creation, which has roots in the biblical tradition. Until the nineteenth century it was possible to regard the world as a completed, static world; but the world in the terms of contemporary science is dynamic and incomplete. This, according to Barbour, makes a difference to theological thinking because 'the coming-to-be of life from matter can represent divine creativity as suitably as any postulated primeval production of matter out-of-nothing.'⁸⁷ In consequence, the analogy of God as maker or craftsman is no longer a suitable image of divine creativity. Creation now refers not to one moment, but to every moment in time. If there appears in the new scientific picture an indeterminacy and novelty, then perhaps God's activity 'is more flexible and experimental than traditionally assumed,'⁸⁸ and God's sovereignty is not coercive. Creation has been a long, slow, and painful drama of growth and development, and the significance of the Cross is that 'God's involvement in the world's suffering is costly.'⁸⁹

The three approaches considered by Barbour

lead to an attenuation of the language of theology as a solution to the problem of the relationship between science and religion. If such an attenuation is unacceptable another approach is needed. Christian theology has traditionally spoken of the reality of the physical world, and it has been maintained that Christian faith in creation as the work of God provided a fertile ground for the systematic investigation of the natural world. According to Torrance, theology needs an understanding of the universe, when natural science is concerned 'with movements of thought....which penetrate to the intrinsic structures of the universe in such a way....that we find ourselves at grips with reality,' because theology is concerned not only with the relationship between man and God, but also with the relationship between 'man in the universe to God the Creator of the universe.'⁹⁰

As the pre-Nicene Church thought through the significance of the events of the Incarnation three over-lapping ideas emerged as important in the presentation of the relationship between man and God as Creator. First, dualism was rejected and this gave rise to the concept of the universe as one harmonious system, and this system was characterised by rationality - this has been one of the fundamental assumptions of all science. Second, there is an essential difference between the Creator and the creature. And third, the transcendence of God implies his freedom with regard to what he has made.⁹¹

Transposed into theological terms these three ideas mean that 'the universe has had conferred freely upon it a created rationality,'⁹² which is derived from God. As the universe is created out of nothing and sustained by God, the universe 'is given a stability beyond anything of which it is capable in its own contingent state.'⁹³ The world is contingent upon God. Torrance sees here an important convergence with natural science, for these are assumptions made by contemporary science and at the same time they are implicit in the theological doctrine of creation.

Torrance develops these three concepts and attempts a balance between a scientific and a theological view of each. He rejects the cutting loose of theology from any connection with a scientific cosmology which would result in theology becoming man-centred and subjective, instead of God-centred and objective. On the other hand, those who claim that faith does not produce a distinctive world-view are, in his view, equally misguided. The reason is that theology cannot be pursued without some consideration of the 'empirical correlates in the continuities of time and space.'⁹⁴

It was in the development of thinking about the relationship between the creation and the Incarnation that theology gave reality to the notion of contingency; but there is a strange meshing of dependence and independence. The world's independence depends upon

the creative act of God, with the result that 'we cannot adequately apprehend the radical nature of contingency except from the perspective of the Creator and his free act of creation.'⁹⁵ An important consequence of Christian theological thinking about creation was that the Greek idea of forms or essences was replaced by the idea of intelligible laws. Creation in Christian theology implies that the world has an autonomous reality distinct from God, and, according to this view, natural law refers to 'the God-given normative patterns in the universe and has to do with the intrinsic truth of objective intelligibility of contingent being.'⁹⁶ If God is transcendent and thus not bound by the world, the laws of nature are empirical sequences and regularities not immanent divine necessities. We shall have occasion to return to the subject of natural law below in Section 2.2.

There are important implications of the Christian belief in the Incarnation. The first impact of the Incarnation was that the basic understanding of the world was changed, for through it Christians learned that the world is not only the creation of God, but also the object of his love and unceasing care.⁹⁷ The second implication of the Incarnation was that the goodness of God was shown in Jesus. The Incarnation reinforced the idea that was already to be found in the biblical tradition that the world is essentially good because it is the work of a good God. The Incarnation had the effect of

sanctifying the world and this implies a new respect for the world not only as 'the medium which God has established for communion between himself and mankind, but also as a creaturely realm of reality endowed with meaning and direction in the creative purposes of God which are yet to be consummated.'⁹⁸ This respect would clearly have moral entailments, but Torrance does not develop the theme of respect and its working out in action. The third implication of the Incarnation is the faithfulness of God, for in spite of the fragility and temporality of the world, it is associated with the constancy of God.⁹⁹

This is an impressive account of the interpenetration of science and theology, and if this account were accepted, it would be possible to answer Whitehouse's question in the affirmative. It is possible to believe as a Christian and at the same time to be aware of and appreciative of the results of natural science. There is no need for theology to retreat into an intellectual ghetto and guard its language from the inroads of empirical procedures, for here is a distinctively Christian view of the universe that takes on board a contemporary scientific understanding of the world.

Having established that there is order in the world and that this order is implicit in the nature of the relationship between God and the world, Torrance wishes to enhance the status of man within the world. It is, he claims, through man that the universe

knows itself in rational order and expression.¹⁰⁰ And this is man's priestly function, for without man the world would lapse into meaninglessness. But does not this involve a confusion between the expression of meaning which man can give and the inherent meaning which man can discover? The rational order in the world does not depend upon man, man is contingent upon that order, and it pre-exists him. To make the rational order dependent upon man removes the world's dependence upon God as the origin of the rational order. There is a difference between the inherent rational order and the rational expression of that order which man can make. The meaning depends upon God, even though man may express in ways that are appropriate to man the meaning that he perceives.

A.R. Peacocke is a scientist by training and, sensitive to the language of religion, he has written with insight about the problem of creation. For him there is no 'uneasy truce' between science and theology, but an interplay of different ways of understanding the world in which man plays an important rôle. His intention has been to form a theological picture of the world which is at least consonant with contemporary science.¹⁰¹

Peacocke shows that it is possible to be conversant with contemporary science and to have a religious faith. Religion and science are not incompatible, they may even be complementary. Peacocke eschews a neo-orthodoxy which prefers to see the Gospel in existential terms, because

such a position would deny the relevance of 'affirmations and propositions about the realities of nature, man, and God, as seen in the light of Christ.'¹⁰²

It is no longer possible, Peacocke maintains, for the Christian to ignore the results of contemporary science. The Christian proclamation has to be made to men who live in a world increasingly aware of new scientific knowledge, and so 'the Christian proclamation can make no claim on them unless it recognises this new world which men's minds inhabit.'¹⁰³ Science and religion cannot simply be assigned to separate language systems and then allowed little interaction, because there is a unity of experience which can make little sense of such a dichotomy. Both religion and science are concerned with human experiences, 'and, for some of us, different experiences of the same individual.'¹⁰⁴ Scientific and metaphysical questions have an underlying purpose of seeking to make sense of our existence. There is no conflict between science and religion, not because there are two different spheres of discourse, but because:

'To believe in God as Creator is to see and read cosmic evolution as God's action, an expression of divine purpose...And just as I am not alongside my actions, so God is not alongside but in and through the whole evolutionary process.'¹⁰⁵

Thus scientific propositions are not separate from or antithetical to religious propositions, but the scientific

data are 'seen-as' the activity of God.

Peacocke describes theology as the attempt to 'register correspondences between the experiences of the ways of God with them (men) and to form these into a coherent framework by elaborating suitable concepts or models, as a basis for future action and experiences.'¹⁰⁶ Therefore he sees a similarity between this theological enterprise and the scientific enterprise which is also an attempt to co-ordinate and interpret experiences. In each enterprise it must be realised that different types of evidence are relevant.¹⁰⁷ Both science and theology assume that sense can be made of the world, or more precisely, 'of that which he constructs from his observations and experiences.'¹⁰⁸

Any idea of the world as static must be ruled out, because the cosmos is in a dynamic state.¹⁰⁹ The emergence of new forms of matter is regarded as in some way an activity of God, the work of creation was not completed at some moment in past time; for if God is outside time, 'that is, if time itself is other than God and part of the created cosmos', then God can be regarded as having a creative relationship with the cosmos.¹¹⁰ This, he claims, is consonant with the belief of Israel and of the Christian Church in the providential hand of God. It has been an important contribution of the Christian faith, derived in turn from the Old Testament tradition, that the biblical understanding of the natural world provided

a basis for empirical investigation of the natural world; for if the world is created by God, and God is not part of the natural world, nature itself is not divine.

The creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 are considered to be 'profound expressions of human existence,'¹¹¹ and Peacocke quotes with approval from Westermann:

'Reflection on creation meant to rehearse in the present world and in man's dangerous situation, the beginning, when what now is came to be...Out of the questioning of a threatened world arose the question about the beginning and the end, about coming into existence and ceasing to exist.'¹¹²

And so the doctrine of creation is a value judgement on what 'living optimally' is, and it is an expression of the awareness that man has of the mystery of his existence and of his own contingency and of the contingency of the world. Peacocke, like Bevan, considers that the doctrine of creation arose from 'a recognition of the natural human response to and attraction for the awesome and mysterious in both numinous and aesthetic experience.'¹¹³ He regards this as an important insight into the meaning of the doctrine of creation, because he uses the same expression, with no change of wording, in other places.¹¹⁴ The awareness that the world is contingent and that we ourselves are contingent generates a search for meaning, for a person must make sense of his own existence in relation to the world which he observes and experiences.¹¹⁵

Considered in this way, the doctrine of creation is not altered by competing cosmological theories because the doctrine is not really concerned with the historical origin of the universe, but with the continuing dependence of the universe upon God for its existence.¹¹⁶

Surveying what is known at the present time of the origin of the universe, Peacocke says that there are two features which stand out: 'the variety is amenable to the ordering of the human mind, and human minds have emerged out of its very stuff.'¹¹⁷ He goes on to regard the new scientific perspective as a 'most compelling pointer to God.'¹¹⁸ But it must be admitted that the pointer is at least an ambiguous one and not self-evident.

The understanding of nature was transformed by the Incarnation, for this was a repudiation of all interpretations of the stuff of the world as evil and alien to God. In the Incarnation God was understood to be achieving his purposes by involvement with and expression through the stuff of the world.¹¹⁹ For Christians, the world is a symbol in the sense that it is a mode of God's revelation, 'an expression of his truth and beauty which are the spiritual reality of the outward.'¹²⁰ Peacocke develops this concept of symbol using matter in order to propose a 'sacramental' view of the world. It is in the nature of a sacrament that matter should have a dual function, symbolic and instrumental, and so 'created

matter has both the symbolic function of expressing God and the instrumental function of being the means whereby God effects his purposes.'¹²¹ To adopt this interpretation of the world is to adopt a particular stance towards the world in which sensibilities are heightened. If God is seen everywhere and at all times in the process and events of the natural world in a way analogous to the way in which we see a person in his body and his actions, this suggests that our attitudes to nature should be like that towards the bodies of other people, not as conglomerates of their component parts, but as agents of individual 'selves'. Thus

'In the case of the natural world, if it is God who is the agent who is expressed therein, man's attitude to nature should show a respect which is transmuted into reverence at the presence of God in and through the whole of the created order, which thereby has, as it were, a derived sacredness, or holiness, as the vehicle and instrument of God's own creative action.'¹²²

Like Torrance, Peacocke uses the phrase, man's 'priestly function'. Peacocke intends to express, not the rationalising rôle that man plays, but the rôle that man can play in the respect, even reverence, for creation as a sacrament; for only man is aware of God, of himself, and of the world. It is the function of a priest to act as a mediator, and man can mediate between insentient nature and God.¹²³ As a priest, man can become aware of the needs of the insentient

world and minister to those needs and further the purposes of God in doing so. On this basis, Peacocke argues for an ethical approach to ecological problems. Whether this approach can be used in dealing with other ethical problems concerning life and death will be considered below in Section 3.

7. The language of the doctrine of creation.

The statement, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' appears to have the form of an epistemic statement, that is, it appears to describe specific action at some specific time. But most writers are agreed that his appearance is deceptive, for although the statement may have the form of an epistemic statement, it is not epistemic in function, that is, it does not provide knowledge which is open to empirical verification. The statement occurs in a passage which is mythological in character, and it is not the function of myths to offer epistemic statements. In the context of Genesis 1 the statement expresses the relationships between man, the world and God. Outside this context, the statement is sometimes used as if it were an epistemic statement, but that is an error.

If the statement is not epistemic, another category must be found. Yarnold suggested that to speak of God as Creator is not to assert a proposition about temporal beginnings, that is to say, not an epistemic statement; but it is a cognitive statement asserting that the world is not meaningless.¹²⁴ The statement, 'God created the world', may be derived from experience of the world, but experience cannot be used to prove or disprove the statement, since it is an article of faith, and as such there is no external objective test which could count either for or against it. It is more appropriate to

recognise that the statement is held as an integral part of a total attitude.

In his essay, 'From world to God',¹²⁵ Phillips makes a different attempt to deal with the 'queerness' of the statement, 'God is the creator of the world.' He points out that we can recognise a first cause and we can ask the question, So what? But can one recognise God as one's Creator and ask the same question? He thinks not. This owes much to the distinction between 'belief-that' and 'belief-in' and the observation that 'belief-in' has its own entailments. The statement, 'God is creator' is, Phillips concludes, not an ordinary statement, in spite of its appearances; it is a statement of belief. According to the Wittgensteinian analysis which Phillips uses, the statement is commissive and evaluative, so that 'When someone asks why there is anything at all, he need not be asking for the details of any process of development, his question may be about the sense, or meaning of reality of everything.'¹²⁶

Rhees, also following Wittgenstein, says that theology is 'just learning the sort of things that it is correct to say.'¹²⁷ When this is applied to the statement, 'God is the Creator of the world,' the question is not concerned with the beginning of things, but, 'Why is there anything at all? What is the sense of it?' And so, to express belief in God as Creator is an expression of wonder at the world, 'the wonder at there being anything

at all. There is gratitude in this too - gratitude for the existence of things.'¹²⁸ Rhees claims that it is possible to know what God is only through 'coming to know God,'¹²⁹ that is, the truth of theological statements can only be known from the inside. This is an attractive idea, because it seems to defend religious statements from outside criticism. But this will not do. First, religious statements are in a form that the unbeliever can understand the content, if he is prepared to make the effort. Second, religious statements are not 'remote' and esoteric, they do appear to make statements about the world as it is in normal experience. Third, the suggestion is that the truth of religious statements can only be known from the inside, and this is acceptable only if the 'truth' is 'interiorised', so that the truth is 'true for me'. Although this has been one aspect of the function of religious statements, it has not been the complete picture of religious language as it has been used by believers. Religious statements may not be epistemic, but they are to some extent cognitive in the sense of providing knowledge, albeit a specialised knowledge, of the world.

The analysis of religious language into 'attitude language' is an attempt, under the influence of empiricism, to overcome the difficulties in religious language caused by its explicit or implicit metaphysics. In this way religious language can be

regarded as expressing attitudes and behaviour programmes that the speaker or believer adopts. But it is often the case that when a person 'loses his faith', he might still wish to perform the good actions, adopt the same attitudes, and follow the same behaviour programmes which are said to be all that is involved in religious language, but he will no longer use the 'useful fictions' of religious language. The person who 'loses his faith' no longer accepts or believes in the propositions to which he was once committed and to which the behaviour programme was connected.

It is probably impossible to ignore the fact that religious statements come with an implied metaphysics, and attempts to interpret religious statements without reference to metaphysics are probably doomed to failure from the outset, because such attempts aim at reducing religious statements to one level or one function, whereas religious language functions at more than one level, just as the language of good poetry functions at more than one level - it provides knowledge or understanding, and insight, and it is involving and evocative.

It is possible to regard statements of belief in God as Creator as providing a way of looking at the world. According to this view, faith is 'seeing-as'. In consequence, there would not necessarily be any conflict between the statements of science and the statements of religion, for they would each be considered as two

autonomous ways of looking at the world, and sometimes the one would be more appropriate than the other. The artist, for example, might provide insight into the way things are, the physicist might also provide insight. Sometimes the novelist provides insight into the behaviour of others, sometimes the psychologist provides insight into the same behaviour. The insight of the artist is no less 'true' than the insight of the scientist simply on the grounds that that insight is not based on scientific methods. Each approach is appropriate and its 'truth' depends upon its 'fit' with experience. If the credal statement, 'God created the world', is used as an epistemic proposition, the criteria for such a proposition must be applied, and when the original proposition is found wanting in verifiability, there is the probability that the proposition will be rejected, with subsequent loss of vision. But when religious statements are regarded as 'seeing-as' this danger is avoided.

A fruitful approach to religious statements is by way of 'models', that is, 'a symbolic representation of selected aspects of the behaviour of a complex system for particular purposes.'¹³⁰ A model is an imaginative tool for ordering experience, rather than a description of the world. Models are used in scientific discourse as mental constructs to account for observed phenomena, they are taken seriously but not literally. In religious discourse models are organising images used to order and

interpret patterns of experience, they evoke and express distinctive attitudes. Just as models are used in scientific discourse to interpret other patterns of observation, so in religious discourse models are 'organising images which re-structure one's perception of the world.'¹³¹

Peacocke adopts this use of models so that, in his view, the theological model of God the Creator is interpretative of experience, indeed, it 'cannot fail to shape what we see the non-human world as.'¹³² In order to be effective a model must have certain characteristics:

- (a) a model must be believable, that is, it must be 'connectable' with the world of our experience;
- (b) a model must be an adequate picture of reality so that it can provide perceptions of the world; and
- (c) a model must be able to provide motivation for good action.

It is no longer a matter of whether the statement, 'God created the world', is a true epistemic statement, but whether it is an effective model, and whether it is an image which is capable of providing a coherent picture of reality and of ordering the experience of the world.

The model of God the Creator is effective because it represents God as the pivot of meaning. The model evokes particular responses to man's situation in the world. And it is commissive, with entailments for moral behaviour. If the model is expressed in ways that

are consonant with what else a man understands of his situation, the model of God as Creator might be effective as a means of interpreting his experience which is relevant for moral decision-making.

Theology is a way of construing the world and its task is to interpret experiences and to form them into a coherent framework by means of developing suitable concepts and images. The doctrine of creation is one of these images. Developing from the biblical tradition, the doctrine of creation is a means of looking at the world theistically, and the assertion that the world is created by God is an evaluative statement of the significance of the world as rational and orderly and contingent. It is a means of seeing the world 'sub specie divinitatis'. Religious belief is more than the acceptance of certain propositions; it also involves commitment. Our increased knowledge of the development of the created order and of man's development within and from it will no longer permit an anthropocentric interpretation of the world. The task now is to consider the part that the doctrine of creation might play in moral decision-making.

II. The doctrine of creation and moral theology.

1. Introduction.

The task of moral theology is to establish the moral notions and moral behaviour that are appropriate for those who profess certain beliefs about God. Most people who make moral judgements live according to some beliefs and rules, however unco-ordinated or inchoate, that enter their understanding of the situation and their behaviour.

It must be admitted that Christianity cannot be reduced to ethics; indeed, it might be regarded as a reflection of the lack of confidence in faith to attempt such a reduction as a means of finding 'relevance' for faith without the encumbrance of metaphysics which theistic faith imposes. Christian ethics does not find its answers in theology, nevertheless theology and faith will affect the outlook and behaviour of the believer. This is so since belief involves a view of the world.

In the previous section it has been contended that religious statements have certain entailments, and if Christians are distinguished by having certain ideas of God, man, and the world, it is to be expected that these ideas and beliefs will influence their moral judgements. Thus, it can be claimed that, 'the job of Christian ethicists (is) to try to suggest the form of the language that is most appropriate for the nature

of the Christian life.¹

If creation is the religious conceptual link between God and reality, then, as McDonagh suggests, creation might appear to root moral demands.² And Böckle rightly observes that when nature is spoken of in creation this removes all taboos from nature, and faith in creation makes the world free from restraint of investigation or use.³ But Böckle offers no development of the moral implications of this observation. Unless the doctrine of creation is more precise, the rooting of moral demands remains out of focus. Both Böckle and McDonagh are content with a simple anthropocentric view of the Genesis accounts, and this leads to a restriction of moral demands derived from creation, since they are then limited to human interests and concerns. Curran, too, writes that the creation of the individual constitutes the basis of the dignity and respect for human life,⁴ without drawing attention to the further moral implications of creation of all things; and this omission suggests that respect for life is limited to respect for human life, even though that itself is an important consideration.

It has already been observed in Section 1 that there is a tendency in the presentation of the doctrine of creation to emphasise anthropocentrism, and that that tendency is to be resisted. Similarly, when reference is made in moral theology to creation, there is a tendency towards anthropocentrism. For example, Lehmann

maintains that we should consider that in creation 'God is doing what it takes to make and keep human life human.'⁵ But it is to be seriously questioned whether this is an adequate view of the ethical implications of creation. The doctrine of creation that may be presupposed in Lehmann's dictum seems to be too circumscribed, limiting God's concern to only one part of the created order.

Sometimes when creation is used as a starting-point in moral theology, the argument develops into a presentation of natural law. Ward, for example, points out that traditional Catholic moral theology tends to regard morality as a matter of discovering how to fulfil one's natural or proper human nature, and as a result moral principles are considered to be grounded in the natural order of things or in natural law.⁶ Indeed, it is claimed that creation necessarily leads on to natural law.⁷ Following Aquinas, natural law is then thought of as the eternal law of God governing his creation; the moral life consists in discovering one's natural inclinations and acting to reach the proper end of human nature. A more detailed consideration of natural law will be sought below in Chapter 2.

It has been the usual practice, especially in English moral philosophy, to discuss moral behaviour in terms of action rather than in terms of the motivation of the agent, probably because the latter course would run the risk of involving psychology which is not always

subject to the rigours of philosophical analysis. But the outcome has been a discussion of action unrelated to the agent. However, an attempt to redress the balance has been made by Evans who uses the insights of depth psychology.⁸ It is useful here to draw attention to one important aspect of his analysis. Evans considers the development of religion and morality and their inter-relationship; and from this development he isolates a number of virtues, or positive attitudes. A moral virtue is,

'...a pervasive, unifying stance which is an integral part of a person's fulfilment as a human being, and which influences his actions in each and every situation, especially his dealings with other human beings.'⁹

According to Evans, morality not only deals with how we treat other people, but also with what we ought to be as a person. An important moral virtue is 'self-commitment', which deals with a lack of sense of personal identity. Thus the significant question here is, 'Who am I in relation to the human community and the cosmos?' A person who lacks this positive attitude no longer feels a part of the world and is a stranger even to himself, and

'If I am a stranger to myself and the community, an alien in the cosmos, I feel too much confusion to be competent, too much insecurity to be conscientious. I need a new self-commitment to a trustworthy vision of the natural world and human history and human community and of my role in relation to them.'¹⁰

Self-commitment, according to Evans, can be unifying and integrating when it is related to that which unifies the total environment; and a 'typical Christian theology for such a pervasive stance stresses the divine Word or Logos as the meaning of the cosmos and history.'¹¹ It has been argued in Section I that the doctrine of creation is an evaluative notion and an attempt to express an understanding of the relation of man to the world and to God. As such, it would give meaning and coherence to the cosmos. If the doctrine of creation is a trustworthy vision of the natural world, it might provide a basis for self-commitment.

In an interesting paper in Health/Medicine and the Faith Traditions, Vaux has made an attempt to incorporate the doctrine of creation into a prolegomenon to medical ethics. Basing his judgement on Psalm 8, Vaux states that 'the doctrine of creation is about moral management of the natural world and moral living in reciprocity and mutual realisation within the human community.'¹² Unfortunately, this doctrine of creation is too narrowly based, taking as it does only one scriptural passage among many, and the result is a doctrine of creation which is too narrow in its range. The implications of this narrow conception are to be seen when Vaux continues:

'People are the mediation of God into the world; the instrumentality with which God's tasks in the history of nature is being pursued.'¹³

This places a serious limit to the activity of God, creative
and

otherwise. Furthermore, evolutionary biology shows that much change occurs without the intervention of man, and it would be extraordinary to judge that such changes are not part of the creative work of God. The intention is good, namely, to draw attention to the seriousness of the moral task that confronts man, but there is little doubt that the judgement is anthropocentric and at variance with our knowledge of the world. There must be more to the doctrine of creation than the attainment of man's purpose. If the term 'God' in the sentence cited were to be replaced by 'humanity', there would be little with which the humanist might disagree, and that might be quite laudable, but there is not much left of the distinctiveness of Christian belief for which Vaux had pleaded earlier.¹⁴ But surprisingly, Vaux claims that this analysis shows that 'not only the knowledge and technology of medicine, but also the moral imperatives relative to that sphere are derived from divine creation.'¹⁵ It is difficult, however, to agree that on this basis the moral imperatives have been demonstrated. It may well be true, as Vaux states, that 'medicine and theology have much to offer each other in understanding creation and the moral architecture of life,'¹⁶ but Vaux does not develop the argument to demonstrate the connection, except to state that the introduction of the concepts of transcendence and universality might rescue medicine from the morality of secular humanism.¹⁷ If the rescue is to be effected,

the lifebelt of a doctrine of creation must be one of greater extent and vision than that presupposed by Vaux.

In several of his writings Gustafson has incorporated a doctrine of creation into his moral theology. He establishes that Christians have a particular stance or perspective which affects their moral thinking and moral action. This perspective contains certain distinctive elements, for example, 'the goodness of God and the goodness of the world he created, the reign of God in the preservation of that which he has created... At another level there are things believed about man: men are created to live together in order and in love.'¹⁸ These elements have their basis in the doctrine of creation. Gustafson contends that the Christian perception of creation affects what the Christian values, for 'it gives direction to the moral ends that he seeks...to the preferences that he articulates in word and deed.'¹⁹ Thus a Christian will discern not only what is the case, but also what ought to be the case; his belief will facilitate discernment.

Gustafson makes a useful distinction between ethics and morals in order to clarify the rôle of Christian ethics. According to this distinction, ethics refers to the abstract consideration of conduct, of the assumptions and presuppositions of moral life. On the other hand, morals refer to the actual conduct of people. The problem in morals is a practical one rather than

theoretical. Faith in Christ as Creator and Redeemer makes a difference to the 'basic attitude or disposition of the moral man.'²⁰ The change involved is significant because the disposition is more than an intellectual change, and according to Gustafson, 'no belief about the good has ever moved men to do the good...belief about the good must be coupled with a will to do the good....Moral life is not just something cerebral; it is visceral.'²¹ Whilst it is possible to agree with Gustafson that there is more moral struggle in the emotions than there is in intellectual abstraction, it has to be admitted that the rôle of emotions in moral decision-making is ambiguous.

In moral theology the intention is not to make universally applicable statements about man, but to understand the existence of human beings in their relationship to God. Creation by God is a presupposition of this understanding of man's existence, for man's relationship to God and to his fellow men is determined by his creation. The doctrine of creation articulates the belief that man is dependent upon God and that nothing is his by right; man is limited by his creature-hood; and he is sustained by God and by others created by God. Above all, he is created in the image of God and in this Gustafson draws attention, not to an anthropocentric view of the world, which he criticises,²² but to man's purposive actions, that is, 'he can act for others as God has acted for him in Jesus Christ; he can have purposes

for his existence as God has purposes for the whole of creation.²³ Created by God, man sees himself, not as master, but as servant under obligation to God who gives life, and so, 'their (Christians') interpretation of moral responsibility is set within the framework of God's disclosure to man that he is his Creator.'²⁴ For the believer, the expression of belief in God has certain moral implications: first, created life is accepted as a gift; second, since God is absolute, man must remember his own finitude; third, man is accountable to the Creator; and fourth, man is responsive to purposes which are made possible by God.²⁵

It has already been noted in Section I that a significant aspect of the doctrine of creation is that the believer's attention is directed to the created world, and Gustafson makes it explicit that the Christian is responsible to God and that requires 'that one have knowledge of the world in which he is called to live.'²⁶ Thus it is necessary to know as accurately as possible the human conditions in which obedience is to be exercised. There must be a constant dynamic interplay between his knowledge of the world and the Christian's obedience to God, and so Christian morality cannot be derived simply from the Bible, nor based solely on dogmatic propositions.

When the doctrine of creation takes cognisance of the knowledge of the created order, anthropocentric interpretations of Genesis are out of order. The

vastness and complexity of the universe and the influence of biological change on the past and the present conditions suggest that our own species must be seen in a wider context, therefore it is no longer serious to maintain a self-interested conviction that the whole has come into being for our sake.²⁷ This greater understanding affects the view we take of the nature of man, since human life is radically dependent upon the rest of the natural world, not only in the present but also historically. Consequently claims for radical freedom, particularly the claims expressed in theology influenced by existentialism, cannot be sustained in the light of the growing realisation of the dependence or contingency of human life.

Although a more detailed consideration of the moral theology of S.Hauerwas will follow below in Chapter 5, it is appropriate here to draw attention to one aspect of his moral theology - the way in which he incorporates a doctrine of creation. Hauerwas' moral theology is probably the most successful and convincing attempt to take on board a doctrine of creation.

Hauerwas maintains that as creatures of God our life is fundamentally a gift and this statement of belief has important moral implications, because inherent in man's creature-ness is his social nature.²⁸ A man's character can be modified, but not apart from the component parts of one's character, that is, actions and deeds. This modification of character is called

'sanctification' in which God 'does not act contrary to or above his creation, but through it and in it.'²⁹ The way in which this modification or sanctification of the character takes place is affected by the basis of the modification, that is to say that the modification is determined by basic beliefs about God and the commitment to those beliefs on the reasonable assumption that what a person does is an outward manifestation of the basic disposition of that person, the sort of person he is:

'Character is the basic aspect of our existence. Nothing about me is more "me" than my character.'³⁰

The character is changed by the beliefs that one holds, because beliefs are 'the appropriate symbols of the language of faith.'³¹ To be a Christian is to profess certain beliefs which involve a perspective on the world, a perspective which changes the way in which we see the world and ourselves, particularly the belief in creation alters our view of the world, as it was suggested in Section 1. According to Hauerwas, to lead a moral life involves how one sees the world.³²

The doctrine of creation is a way of seeing the world; it provides a perspective by which to order the experience of reality. This perception may offer a way forward in the resolution of some pressing moral dilemmas, namely, by moving away from legalism and act-centred moral discussion to a character-based and perspective-based moral theology in which the doctrine of creation plays a significant part.

2. Natural Law.

It has already been observed that there has been a connection in traditional Catholic moral theology between creation and natural law; for example, Häring is of the opinion that creation necessarily leads on to natural law.³³ In the search for a 'creation-ethic', it is appropriate to examine the concept of Natural Law, as a possible method of Christian moral decision-making and its connection with the doctrine of creation.

The Natural Law theory has been regarded by some as an invalid approach to moral theory, because it assumes a transition from a description of the state of affairs to a statement of what ought to be the case. But this criticism regards natural law as something which is imposed from without. But recent modifications of natural law theory would suggest that this may not be a true representation.

To enter upon the study of the concept of Natural Law is to walk a minefield. The theory abounds with misunderstandings and variations in emphasis. There can be little doubt that Natural Law has had a long and influential history in the development of moral and legal philosophy, as d'Entrèves and, more recently, Finnis have shown.³⁴

The great synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology constructed by Aquinas

contains an influential definition of Natural Law. For Aquinas, law is something which is discovered by an act of reason, it does not exist outside it. He described law as a 'rule and measure of actions whereby one is induced to act or is restrained from acting.'(S.T.1-2,90.1) There is another sense of law as existing in that which is ruled or measured:

'And it is in this way that law is in all those things that are inclined toward something in virtue of some law; thus any inclination arising from some law can be called a law, not essentially, but as it were in a participative sense.'(S.T.1-2,90.1)

Law, then, is an act of reason.

Aquinas starts from the belief that the entire community of the universe is under the governance of God and of God's reason. Thus the eternal law is the intelligent grasp of 'the governance of things that exist in God as the ruler of the universe.'(S.T.1-2,91.1) It follows that the eternal law is 'the intelligent grasp of the divine wisdom, insofar as it is directive of all acts and movements.'(S.T.1-2, 93.1) What Aquinas meant by the Natural Law is the participation of intelligent, rational creatures such as man in the eternal law.

The eternal law is the plan of divine wisdom directing all things to the attainment of their ends. Inanimate bodies act in certain ways precisely because they are what they are, and they cannot act

otherwise; they cannot perform actions which are contrary to their nature. The Natural Law, as law, is not innate; what is innate is the ability of the rational creature to get to know the body of true judgements bearing on the meaning of human actions that together make up the Natural Law.

All creatures below man participate unconsciously in the eternal law, which is reflected in their various tendencies, and they do not possess the freedom which is required in order to be able to act in a manner incompatible with this law. But man, as a rational and free being, is capable of acting in ways which are incompatible with the eternal law. Although man cannot read the eternal law in God's mind, he can discern the fundamental tendencies and needs of his nature, and by reflecting upon them, he can come to know the natural moral law. Every man has the natural inclinations to the development of his potentialities and the attainment of the good for man. Every man also possesses the light of reason whereby he can reflect on these fundamental inclinations of his reason and promulgate to himself the natural moral law, which is the totality of the universal precepts or dictates of right reason concerning the good which is to be pursued and the evil which is to be shunned. Since this law is a participation in or reflection of the eternal law insofar as the latter concerns human beings and their free acts, man is not left in ignorance of the

eternal law which is the ultimate rule of all conduct.

Law is defined by Aquinas as an ordinance of reason, and irrational creatures cannot recognise and promulgate to themselves any natural law. The term 'natural law' is applicable, in the strict sense, not to the natural tendencies and inclinations of man on which his reason reflects, but to the precepts which his reason enunciates as a result of his reflection.

Aquinas drew parallels between the behaviour of animals and the behaviour of man. Because men are substances, they share with other substantial entities an inclination to persevere in being; because men are by nature animals, they share with other animals an inclination to mate and rear children; because men are by nature rational creatures, they possess an inclination to seek the truth about God and to live in society in peace and harmony. In drawing attention to these inclinations that man shares with animals, Aquinas states that 'those things are said to be of the natural law which nature teaches all animals.' (S.T.1-2, 94.2)

There are two aspects of Natural Law in Aquinas' presentation. The first, which we might call Natural Law A, is legal, in which the law is known by means of man's reason. The law is 'engraved in the nature of man' in the sense that man himself discovers the way of living in concrete situations. Thus, the natural law functions by means of inferences from propositions about

his nature. The principles of natural law can be grasped by anyone of the age of reason, the principles are self-evident and indemonstrable. The principles of natural law are not inferred from the facts about man.

The second aspect of Natural Law, which we might call Natural Law B, interprets natural law as teleological. Man has a nature like that of other creatures and right conduct can be inferred from judgements defining man's nature and the function of a human being.

To a large extent, Catholic moral theology has maintained Natural Law A. To overlook the difference between the two aspects tends to lead to confusion. In his examination of natural law, Häring has weakened the legal aspect of Natural Law A, for he writes:

'...natural law means the very nature of man in his concrete historical reality, insofar as he has the capacity to understand himself, his calling and his vocation, and the meaning of his person and his relationship to God, his fellow men, and to the created universe.'³⁵

But there is a reluctance to abandon a preconceived notion of the human, overloading it with concepts and definitions that are not derivable from 'concrete reality'. Häring wishes to preserve the theological origins of natural law, for he writes:

'It is fundamental to natural law, and belongs to the idea of humanity and the unity of mankind, that man has the capacity to ask himself what he is and what he is meant to do and be.'³⁶

"Haring follows the path set out by Aquinas, that is, Natural Law A, as a theological concept. It is clear that Haring has a previously assumed definition of man:

'Man begins to exist as a fully human being only when he develops beyond the stage of merely caring about his nourishment, protecting himself against the natural elements, and learning to use tools. He is not "homo sapiens" until he comes to exist in a human way, as an outgoing person who has developed some capacity to reciprocate love and thus to become conscious of a moral problem.'³⁷

Of course, there is no way of knowing when this development took place; furthermore, there is no reason to assume that the capacity to love and to reciprocate love does not, or cannot, co-exist with concern for shelter, etc. The definition of 'homo sapiens' that Haring uses implies a moral judgement on the superiority of the outgoing person, which rests upon other criteria. Reliance on Natural Law A leads Haring into absurdity, for he claims:

'Natural law begins before philosophising about the natural law, but it does not begin at all until man has to some extent been able to reflect on his experience and can "realise" that he is bound by some moral value.'³⁸

There are two perceptions of the term 'natural law' which have been confused: first, there is the 'natural law' which constitutes reality in which man finds himself and by which he is himself formed; and second, there is the sense of 'natural law' as a moral concept derived from reflection

upon man's relationship to the created order (Natural Law A). Man's nature is prior to all reflection upon it; and he can act according to his nature without reflection upon that nature or his actions. Man can act according to his nature (that is, according to Natural Law B) without ceasing to be man, unless reflection is assumed to be an essential part of the definition of human-ness. It later becomes clear why Haring["] has made such an assertion:

'...natural law is based on the self-revelation of God to the human intellect through the work of creation. The intellect faces a living and loving God and becomes blessed with an adoring outlook towards him rather than concentrating on an impersonal collection of abstract norms.'³⁹

Haring is using 'natural law' in a restricted sense, as a term only having validity in a theological context, rather than as a reference to man's understanding of himself in the context of his 'concrete reality'. As Ramsey observes, '..rationalism and not empiricism in the modern sense has been the philosophical framework in which natural law interpretations of ethics...have seemed persuasive.'⁴⁰ Much discussion of natural law, that is, Natural Law A, has taken place in terms of abstractions unrelated to the empirical world.

It is natural law as Natural Law B that Macquarrie thinks will form a bridge between Christian ethics and general ethics, because, in his opinion, 'natural law claims to be founded on the way things are,'⁴¹ and 'it

is the pointer within us that orients us to the goal of human existence.'⁴² Maritain rightly pointed out that there is an order or disposition that human reason can discover and man has ends which correspond to his natural constitution.⁴³

Curran, however, has questioned the traditional Catholic interpretation of natural law which rested on a closed concept of human nature (Natural Law A). Mankind, according to Curran, is able to interfere with nature and move towards self-creation and self-direction, consequently 'any theological position based on a closed concept of human nature...will be an inaccurate understanding of the human reality.'⁴⁴ He therefore rejects the deductive approach with its assumption that there is some metaphysical substance called the 'essence' from which moral deductions can be made. The result of the traditional approach has been an authoritarianism and 'an over-emphasis on the rights of the Church as the authentic interpreter of the natural law.'⁴⁵ Such an approach, Curran maintains, has prevented any real dialogue with the special sciences, with philosophy and with the arts. He regards this as a serious lack in moral theology, because moral theology then loses contact with reality and its applicability. In its place Curran proposes that such a dialogue should take place:

'If one takes seriously the fact that all men share the same humanity and can arrive at some

ethical conclusions, then dialogue becomes an absolutely necessary aspect of our existence as Christians.⁴⁶

Curran might have added that Christian belief in creation requires that the created order as concrete reality should also be taken seriously.

Curran points to a significant difference between Catholic and Protestant ethics, and observes that the latter has given less attention to the possibility of deriving any moral insight from the natural order. The reason for this partial blindness has been an insistence in Protestant circles on deriving moral insight from Scripture alone, and this has involved an emphasis on sin and the fall. As an example, Curran cites Thielicke:

'..the possibility of impossibility of working back to the eternal order depends upon the understanding of sin, upon the degree to which we think the being of our world is altered and impaired by the rest of the fall.'⁴⁷

Faced with such a judgement, it is pertinent to ask whether it is possible to describe the world as 'fallen'. We have no means of knowing what a world that has not 'fallen' would be like. The theological picture does not seem to have any correspondence with the world known to empirical science. It might make some sense to speak of man as 'fallen', in the sense that he is 'predisposed to sin', but it seems to stretch language beyond meaningfulness to speak of a world that is 'sinful', if 'sinful' means

consciously turning away from God. There is little point in denying that man finds the world a dangerous and often frightening place, but to describe such a world as 'fallen', makes many assumptions about the nature and purpose of the world and of man's place within it, assumptions which man is in no position to make. Probably Curran is aware of the difficulty when he writes:

'The Christian horizon with its acceptance of creation recognises the basic goodness of creation and its continuing validity because of which it can serve as a source of moral wisdom.'⁴⁸

But Curran spoils this note of acceptance by trying to have it both ways, when he continues:

'...but at the same time such a vision must also realise the imperfections, limitations, and sinfulness of the creation as it exists to day.'⁴⁹

Either the creation is good or it is sinful and imperfect; it would be difficult for it to be both at the same time. The problem arises when we try to interpret the world and its 'imperfections' from the standpoint of our own interests. The Catholic tradition, Curran suggests, in using the term 'nature', did not refer to 'what is historically existing at the present time after the fall, but rather to that metaphysical understanding of what man is in all possible states of human history.'⁵⁰ But this represents a shift away from nature as the concrete reality to an abstraction that is removed from the world of experience, and it is a

matter of some doubt whether the term has any value.

In Transition and Tradition in Moral Theology Curran takes note of some of the criticisms that have been made of the concept of natural law as it has been used in the standard works of Catholic moral theology. These works, he claims, have been mechanical, delivering judgement on actions on the basis of decisions justified on other grounds. He suggests that what is needed is a greater emphasis on the growth and change in the individual person, and on the particular and contingent. And so a different methodology is needed, one which is inductive rather than deductive. A different approach would place

'...more emphasis on the personal and less on the natural and call for a greater stress on the subject. Morality according to some cannot be based only on the finality and purpose of the faculty seen in itself apart from the whole person.'⁵¹

In moving away from the former deductive approach to natural law (Natural Law A), Curran argues for an approach which is more open and dependent upon the stance that is adopted. For the Christian, this stance is expressed in terms of a belief in the creative activity of God:

'The Christian who accepts the basic goodness of creation and its continuing validity has a source of ethical wisdom which exists outside the pale of explicit Christianity and which he thus shares with all mankind.'⁵²

Curran then uses a phrase about natural law which is

associated with Aquinas, namely, the law which is 'written in the heart of man'; although he regards such terminology to be too deontological, he admits that it 'points to the basic understanding of a common ground morality based on creation.'⁵³ But here is the problem, for if by 'creation' Curran intends to refer to 'how things are', then it would be possible to have a 'common ground' for morality. However, if the natural law is connected with the doctrine of creation, there is less likelihood that it will form the basis for a common morality, since creation by God is not a part of the belief-system of the non-theist. The Christian's belief in creation by God is distinctive, consequently to make creation the basis of a common morality is to chase after rainbows.

"Böckle has attempted to give depth and coherence to the notion of natural law (that is, Natural Law B), by giving some meaning to the term 'nature'. He writes:

'It is essential to go back to nature, as the sphere of man's existence, if we are to obtain any morally relevant insight, but it has to be borne in mind that this procedure is subject to presuppositions based on the human sciences, our knowledge of evolution and other factors.'⁵⁴

Thus nature is no longer some vague, ill-defined and remote abstraction, but a term to be located in empirical reality. But the argument loses some force when Böckle goes on to make reference to observations on the differences between

animal and human behaviour:

'Animal behaviour and human behaviour take place at different levels. Animal behaviour is governed by the dynamism of its impulses, an animal is bound to act correctly. Man, on the other hand, is capable of making decisions.'⁵⁵

This easy distinction between animals and man on the basis of their different natures has long held sway in moral philosophy. Increased knowledge, however, of both human and animal behaviour has cast doubt on the validity of this distinction. Man does not always act rationally, and it is by no means apparent that animals do not make decisions, as we shall see below in Chapter 3.

In a fascinating essay in Norm and Context in Christian Ethics, Little has drawn attention to the use made by Calvin of natural law. Calvin's consideration begins with the theological assumption that all experience is ordered according to a divine design. All legal and moral regulations derive from and point to the 'perpetual rule of love', which is the same as 'God's eternal law', thus 'the rule of love is the law of creation, or the law according to which the entire natural-social order was designed.'⁵⁶ Whilst recognising that man has been corrupted, Calvin says that God has left his law implanted in man's nature and he has done so for two reasons: first, to prod man in the direction of his true purpose; and second, to convict and condemn him because

he must be prodded, and he is not voluntarily disposed to act in accordance with love of God and man.⁵⁷

Little then uses examples from the study of the behaviour of primates and from anthropological studies, and he observes:

'If our anthropologists are right, for man to remain man, his cultural-cooperative characteristics must survive along with his biological existence. Beings become human insofar as they are capable of symboling and sharing. There is, as it were, a certain fixed design to the concept human which designates what man must do and be, if he will survive as man.'⁵⁸

The significance of these observations is that they seem to support the insights of Calvin into the nature of morality in human society, for they explain why co-operation and physical survival are morally important considerations; the natural law is more important than a prohibition, because 'it contains the requirement that we give our neighbour's life all the help we can.'⁵⁹ For Calvin, human nature could only be properly understood with reference to the realisation of God's design. If God made man, then he is made to function in particular ways, and so, 'man ought to act as he was intended or created to act.'⁶⁰ The implication here is that to believe in God as Creator is to hold a specific view of man as a part of God's creation, and that view must make a difference to one's moral thinking.

The doctrine of creation and its

correlate, the Incarnation, require that the created order be taken seriously, and the concept of Natural Law draws attention to the utility of the created order for the construction of moral action. But nature, uninterpreted, does not provide a blueprint for moral action. Technological and medical manipulation of nature, in ways which are considered to be beneficial, have had the effect of reducing the impact of nature as a source of moral knowledge, so that it is no longer a satisfactory moral argument to say that a certain action is contrary to nature. To take but one example: to allow bacteria or viruses to continue their existence unchecked ('to allow nature to take its course') would not be regarded as good medicine, nor a practice acceptable to general or medical ethics. According to the concept of Natural Law B, the natural order provides the essential background to the understanding of the moral agent, and yet even this is not to claim that nature is normative for ethics; but it is to claim that an understanding of the way things are affects our moral actions. Natural Law B is a theory of action in which the norm is concerned with asserting the full capacities of human nature, and thus, by means of an intelligent understanding of the way things are, man might come to a realisation of the meaning of human existence. Finnis calls this 'a dynamic orientation to an understanding of the goods that can be realised by free choice.'⁶¹ The attainment of the goods that are part of man's nature is the fulfilment of potential or human flourishing.

3. The nature of man.

To talk of human flourishing is to imply that there is the possibility of speaking meaningfully of human nature. This possibility has been questioned by many existentialists; and yet many moral theologians have stated that man's nature is an essential starting-point for moral theology. For example, Haring states:

'Knowledge of man is the basic presupposition of all moral discourse. It is on the great question, "What is man?" that the moral theologian joins in dialogue with the behavioural sciences and medicine.'⁶²

But Haring does not go on to consider in detail how we could or should define human nature or join in dialogue with the special sciences.

In a similar vein, Gustafson makes the point that the definition of the nature of man must always be a part of a discussion of ethics, indeed, 'the understanding of the nature of man is one of the keystones to every ethical system.'⁶³ And this is the case, because the ends that men believe ought to guide conduct are related to their view of the good and of the nature of man.⁶⁴ More recently, Gustafson has posed the question whether human life is to be interpreted in terms of the continuities with nature or in terms of its distinctiveness from nature.⁶⁵ To answer such a problem requires an examination of man's nature in terms both of continuity and distinctiveness.

It is this that Midgley has done so effectively in Beast and Man, and since the concept of human nature is fundamental to the problems to be considered by moral theology, she has performed a great service in her consideration of the nature of man and of animals, and in this she has drawn on the work of biologists and animal ethologists.

For many centuries man's place in the order of things and his relation to the animals have been matters for speculation. One representation of this place and relationship is to be found in Genesis 1 and 2; here man is represented as superior to the animals. This superiority is not intended to be moral superiority, but theological, that is, the myths are really concerned with the relationship between man and God, and the myths emphasise the transcendence of God. The reason why the myths did not give a high place to animals was probably theological, that is, lest animals should be regarded as significant cult objects, as they were in many of the surrounding religious cultures. It was argued in Section 1, chapter 2 that the picture of creation in the Old Testament is fairly diverse and in this respect Genesis 1 and 2 were not theologically normative in Israel's faith.

In the controversies of the nineteenth century following the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species the relationship between man and the animals became a serious issue, and man's place was seen to be

under threat. Appeal was made to Genesis 1, but without considering its theological context, for there was little chance that animals would become religious cult objects in nineteenth century England. Instead, much effort was expended in arguing for man's uniqueness, with emphasis on his rationality and his cleverness. More recently, biologists and animal ethologists have considered man's relation to other animals.

In Beast and Man Midgley asks the important question, 'Does man have a nature?' For if man does have a nature it will affect the ways in which we think of his moral nature, moral judgements and prescriptions, because moral insights imply a view of how people really are.⁶⁶ Midgley examines two contemporary views of man's nature: the behaviourist, and the existentialist. According to the behaviourist view, all of man's behaviour is the product of responses to the environment. According to the existentialist view, 'there is no human nature' (Sartre); man is what he chooses to be. Both of these views Midgley rejects on the grounds of their inadequacy; they do not really face the problem of what is meant by 'nature', which Midgley defines as:

'...a certain range of powers and tendencies, a repertoire inherited and forming a fairly firm characteristic pattern, though conditions after birth may vary the details quite a lot.'⁶⁷

Therefore, man is not a blank on which some behaviour is imprinted as time goes on, but a system of inherited patterns.

of behaviour which are modified according to the situation and the needs of that situation.

The studies of animal behaviour conducted by behaviourist psychologists were concerned with learning in laboratory conditions, and thus the learning consisted of tasks which were determined by the experimenter and were not necessarily part of the animals' normal behaviour; for example, rats do not normally find themselves in 'Skinner boxes'. The behaviourists did not consider unlearnt behaviour, such as the child who does not have to learn to suck at the breast, nor the chick to learn to peck at the shell in order to emerge from the egg. Animal ethologists, on the other hand, have observed animals in their natural habitat, and noted that there are various patterns of behaviour. Thorpe has described the development of animal ethology which

'...eventually meant the comparative anatomy of gestures, only now it was the gestures of animals, and not the gestures of human beings which were to be studied and which it was hoped would reveal the true characters of animals - in the same way as the study of human gestures can reveal the characters of men.'⁶⁸

Although psychologists of the behaviourist tendency have tried to avoid all use of the term 'instinct', ethologists have not shown the same fastidious avoidance of the term. A distinction is often drawn between the behaviour of animals and the behaviour of human beings.

Although no behaviourist, Thorpe has described animal behaviour as 'instinctive' in these terms:

'...there is a very strong a priori reason for assuming that these fixed and species-characteristic types of behaviour must be primarily inherited and are relatively little influenced by the individual experience of the particular animal being investigated. But we must of course beware of assuming that all behaviour which is primarily inherited is also rigid.'⁶⁹

In the light of many behavioural studies, Midgley draws attention to the difference between 'closed' and 'open' instincts; 'closed' instincts refer to behaviour patterns which are generally fixed in every detail:

'Here the same complicated pattern, correct in every detail, will be produced by creatures that have been carefully reared in isolation from any member of their own species and from any helpful conditioning.'⁷⁰

On the other hand, 'open' instincts refer to behaviour patterns which are partially determined and which can be modified by experience. Those animals which have more open instincts are said to be more intelligent. There is probably a connection between closed instincts and the length of the life-span; if the creature has only a short life-span there is little time for the pattern of behaviour to be modified, the programming in detail is essential for survival.

The distinction between the behaviour of

animals and the behaviour of human beings is not as obvious as was previously thought, because observation of human behaviour suggests that man too has an inherited pattern of behaviour which is modified by experience. It might be claimed that man is rational whilst assuming that animals are not, and Midgley argues that it is necessary to be clear about what quality is being referred to in this claim. There are two distinct elements to rationality: cleverness and integration; 'by integration I mean having a character, acting as a whole, having a firm and effective priority system.'⁷¹ Integration is a necessary condition of cleverness and 'integration is not confined to people.'⁷² And so it might be said that man's behaviour is not different in kind from that of animals, the difference is one of degree. If the behaviour of animals is regarded as instinctive, then it is thought that this term is unsuitable to be applied to human behaviour, but there is, Midgley observes, an error here:

'People believe that as animals have grown cleverer, they have become less and less dependent on instinct - by which they mean "closed instincts", automatic, fully detailed behaviour patterns like the bees' honey dance. Indeed, instead of instinct, higher animals use intelligence, and man has become so much cleverer than every other animal that he has switched over to intelligence altogether.'⁷³

It should not be assumed that intelligence and instinct are antithetical terms; according to Midgley, this will

not do because

'...instinct covers not just knowing how to do things, but knowing what to do. It concerns ends as well as means. It is the term used for innate tastes and desires, without which we would grind to a halt.'⁷⁴

Rationality includes a definite structure of preferences and this sort of structure is also to be found amongst animals, for it is not peculiar to human beings. The Western philosophical tradition has elevated reason above all else in man's nature and set it over against feeling or desire. Reason on its own is insufficient as a motive for moral action, and it is a limitation to regard man as only functioning rationally, for man has feelings and he must be considered as an integrated whole.

A difference between man and animals which is regarded by some as the most significant difference, even conclusive, is the use of language, and it is true that man has a language 'with a complexity of syntax and of vocabulary vastly beyond that of any animal.'⁷⁵ Midgley refers in this connection to the work done in America in the attempt to teach chimpanzees to 'speak' using sign language. Although the results are not without interest, they are not really significant for the real distinction between man and animals, because the experiments do not take into account the forms of communication used between animals of the same species. Those who are in close contact with animals claim that they 'know' what their

charges are 'saying'; this knowledge is based on close observation of patterns of behaviour. Such intuitive knowledge of animals is, however, questioned on the grounds that animals are not subjects having feelings. But we must exercise caution here before we dismiss the possibility that animals do have feelings. We should consider how we know the feelings of others, for

'Saying that somebody has a feeling is not claiming a hot line to his private experience; it is finding a pattern in his life.'⁷⁶

Just as we find patterns in human behaviour which we can interpret, so it might be possible to observe and interpret patterns in animal behaviour. In human speech people externalise their thoughts and feelings; but we should not assume that this is the only way in which feelings are communicated:

'Both with animals and with man, we respond to the feelings and the motives we read in an action, not only to the action itself.'⁷⁷

Communication between people is vastly more complex than merely understanding the meaning of the words used. Human speech is complex and it is probably species-characteristic behaviour.

Preoccupation with the definition of man as different from the rest of the animals has led to a belief that man is not at home in the world, that he is an alien. Such a view Midgley roundly denies:

'We are at home on this world, because we

were made for it. We developed here, on this planet, and are adapted to live here.'⁷⁸

We might experience the harshness of life on this planet and we might well wish that it were other than it is, but to demand that the world should be made for us is 'a childish and megalomaniac notion.' Midgley sees some value in the Christian view of man, as expressed in the doctrine of creation, because it portrays man as placed on the earth as God's agent, and so the world is not his own and a limit is placed on his conceit. The problem comes, however, when we try to retain the picture without God as its mainstay, and the attempt to do so is crazy.⁷⁹

Emphasis on man's technological skills and on the use of the language of means and ends has tended to produce the idea of man as conquering nature, rather than as 'acknowledging our kinship with the rest of the biosphere.'⁸⁰ The notion of continuity between man and the animals may cause offence, but the offence will be felt not by the adherents of traditional religion, but by those who are so impressed with man's technological and scientific knowledge that they are not prepared to accept a natural explanation of those skills. A consequence of man's preoccupation with technological prowess and his speculative reason has been the overestimation of the language of means and ends; and so Midgley suggests that we should dispense with the language of means and ends and realise that man forms a part of a whole much greater than



himself. She refers with approval to a sentence from The Sovereignty of Good by Iris Murdoch:

'More naturally, as well as more properly, we take a self-forgetful pleasure in the sheer, alien pointless independent existence of animals, birds, stones and trees.'⁸¹

To describe the cat's play as pointless, or the bird's flight as aimless, is to suggest that the human observer sees no point in them and that they do not fit the behaviourist model that has been constructed to explain behaviour. It is to suggest that the actions have no point for man, but that is not true of the animal, and so it is not so much an observation on the animal's behaviour as an observation on the assessment by man of that behaviour. To appreciate that the actions are pointless in this way is to appreciate that their existence is independent of man, to realise their autonomy, and even that they have their own function in the biosphere. Such an appreciation produces wonder at the otherness of things that are not part of our own needs and wants. This wonder,

'....this sense of otherness, is one of the sources of religion, but it is also the source of curiosity, and every vigorous use of our faculties, and an essential condition of sanity.'⁸²

It has already been observed in Section 1, Chapter 6 that this sense of wonder at the otherness of things is an essential element of the doctrine of creation.

The attempts to define man in the past have often lead to a limitation of man; the lines of

demarcation have been drawn so that man has been isolated from his context. By defining man as different from the animals, philosophers may have liberated man from his surroundings, and the intention was honourable, namely, to make man autonomous and to present a picture of man not as he is but as he ought to be. The distinction that was drawn between man and the animals was largely a moral one; and such a view remains in remarks such as: 'He behaved like an animal', where there is no intention to describe or understand the behaviour of animals, but to describe human behaviour which is unacceptable in the human community. The result can be a derogation of the dignity and otherness of animals.

The allegedly crucial difference between man and the animals is man's morality. It is assumed that only man has a moral sense. Moral growth and moral activity necessitate the making of choices, so that 'the choice we make determines the sort of person we are becoming.'⁸³ It is probably no longer safe to assume that animals do not have the problem of choice. They probably do not have the way of solving the problem that people have, that is, by thinking about it,

'But they still have a way of solving it, namely, by a structure of motives that shapes their lives around a certain preferred kind of solution.'⁸⁴

This structure of motives is something that people also have, for without it our attempted thinking about the problem

would get us nowhere. Animal ethologists have drawn attention to the behaviour of communities of animals and have shown that in these communities there is a code of conduct and that the social bonds within the community influence and structure their lives.⁸⁵

In the human context, this structure of behaviour is called 'culture', and some have come to regard 'culture' with some contempt, since it is set over against 'freedom', so that one cannot have both since they are considered to be incompatible. Midgley devotes some attention to this alleged dichotomy. She observes that freedom is a strange term, since it no longer seems to mean freedom from or to do certain things; freedom has become more generalised and extended so that it has come to refer to,

'...the isolation of the individual from all connection with others; therefore from most of what gives life meaning: tradition, influence, affection, personal and local ties, natural roots and sympathies.'⁸⁶

If we say that an animal is 'a creature of habit' or is 'governed by its instincts', we seem to imply that it has no 'freedom'. If we say, 'X is a creature of habit', we imply that X has no 'freedom' or has abdicated his moral autonomy. But such a view is mistaken. Habit is an aspect of continuity, in both animals and people, indeed, habit preserves the individual's continuity and there is nothing exceptional (or blameworthy) in the formation of

a habit, and 'someone who seriously sought to live without routine would be flying in the face of nature.'⁸⁷ It is in this way that we should consider the other aspect of the alleged dichotomy, 'culture'. Our culture is a location; it provides the framework of behaviour and reactions. Midgley defines culture as 'a device for co-ordinating, fixing and developing those systems of choice and comparing wants.'⁸⁸ Culture, therefore, is not alien to man, it is not something imposed on man by some supernatural entity called 'society', for 'society' is people past and present, and those who invented the customs must have had some natural motives for their inventions. Instead of regarding our culture as a prison or dead weight, it would be more reasonable to regard it as a sort of skin, and so 'aspiring to be free from any culture is in one way like trying to be skinless.'⁸⁹ If a person is to make real choices and to be a moral being, then he cannot choose alone, because,

'To choose at all we need intelligible alternatives. And they can be provided only by a culture, that is, by an unseen host of collaborators. Culture is necessary to make rational choice possible. It is the condition of freedom.'⁹⁰

The question, 'Why does man exist?' has been interpreted functionally and therefore it has been given functional answers, and this has led to an anthropocentric view of the world: everything in the world

must be related to man and his desires. But Midgley suggests that the same question could be understood differently; the question could mean, 'How can man best live?' or, 'To what way of life is he best adapted?'⁹¹ These questions can be answered by examining the nature of man in terms of his wants and needs. Problems arise when there is conflict in our wants, and so the full facts are essential to our understanding of the meaning of terms like 'good'; 'thus these facts are not irrelevant to values. If we say that something is good or bad for human beings, we must take our species' actual needs and wants as facts, as something given.'⁹² There should not be two separate procedures, fact-finding and value-establishing, because wants are held together as expressions of the personality. This means considering wants, not as random impulses, but as articulated, recognisable aspects of life.

However, Midgley does not make it clear whether she intends 'wants' or 'needs'. The difference is more than a semantic one. A want could be little more than the expression of a desire; but a need expresses something more, suggesting that if the need is not satisfied the person will be worsened in some way. For example, the little boy who says, 'I want some chocolate', can be understood to be expressing his desire for some chocolate. When he is denied the chocolate, he goes on to plead, 'But I need some chocolate.' Is he now making a stronger claim for the satisfaction of his want, or is he simply re-stating

his desire ? Unless there is some extenuating circumstance, his expression of 'need' cannot be supported. On the other hand, the climber stranded without food may suffer exposure, and he may be said to 'need' some chocolate in order to support life, without it he might suffer more. A want is not the same as need, unless the want is closely identified with need. Midgley states that our basic wants are given, and that a need is something without which we would be worse off. This suggests that wants and needs are synonymous, which is not necessarily the case. A close examination of the nature of man can reveal what the needs of our nature might be, in the sense that unless these needs were satisfied our nature would be worsened. Such an examination may then lead to an understanding of the priority system by means of which the conflict of needs could be resolved. It could be objected that this argument is impermissible, since it is simply a means of deriving 'ought' from 'is'. Midgley is, however, aware of this objection, and elsewhere she counters it in this way:

'If all this is so, something follows which Moore ruled impossible, namely, that facts about our nature can have moral consequences.'⁹³

The facts of our nature are important if we are to argue that true morality is concerned with human flourishing; and not human flourishing only, but also the flourishing of other species.

It is, however, doubtful whether it is possible to derive a morality for human life from a description of animal life, as some socio-biologists have attempted to do. The real contribution that animal studies have made is in the realisation of the continuity between men and animals. On this basis we can expect that human beings will be relatively affectionate to members of their immediate circle, in particular to children. They will form groups. They will range fairly widely. Affection towards clan-mates, love of children, deference to authority, disinclination to kill those who have reminded us of common humanity, even some respect for property, these features of human life do not appear to be derived from our intellectual gifts. We share them with other animals. They are so much part of our nature that we find it difficult to understand those from whom they are absent. 'If it is as mammals that we have this nature, or as primates, then our moral systems are enormously elaborations of pre-rational sentiments.'⁹⁴

Our morality does depend on our nature and on what we think the world is. Gustafson's question whether human life should be interpreted in terms of its continuities with nature or in terms of its distinctiveness from nature now appears to express an inadequate dichotomy. Man's nature is both different and continuous, it is species-characteristic and it shares some of the characteristics of other animals. But what is lacking is a reason

or motive for moral action. Midgley goes some way towards providing a motive when she suggests an ethic of respect for other creatures, as well as of people, as ends in themselves. This ethic of respect can certainly be taken on board by an ethic derived from the doctrine of creation. What is of concern is what difference a belief in creation might make to the expression of this belief in moral action, and so we now turn to the relationship between religion and morality.

4. Religion and morality: 1.

Moral discourse has been the subject of a considerable amount of analysis, and much of this analysis has been based on an empiricist approach to language, which has maintained that moral statements are either expressions of emotion or imperatives. According to this approach, the question, 'Why be good?' need not be asked or answered because 'good' is an action-guiding word. But this is really of no help to the person seeking guidance.

The imperative approach to ethics is sterile, because it side-steps the significant issue, 'What is a good reason for an ethical judgement?'⁹⁵ The reason for this failure to face the issue is, in Toulmin's opinion, the result of a misunderstanding of the nature of language; the proponent of the imperative approach to ethics assumes that the only good argument is one which is based on mathematical or scientific verification.

An alleged advantage of the analytical or imperative approach to moral discourse is the preservation of the autonomy of morals. Kant, however, acknowledged that there is a connection between religion and morality, indeed,

'The moral law commands us to make the highest possible good in a world the final object of all our conduct. This I cannot hope to effect except through the agreement of my will with that of a holy and beneficent Author of the world.'⁹⁶

But in Reason and Belief, although he admits that no sharp line can be drawn between the dogma and the ethics of traditional Christianity, Blanshard finds the connection between religious belief and morality unsatisfactory, because the dogma has a supernatural element. He therefore finds encouragement in a secularising tendency in theology, which aims to set free ethics from theological belief, so that moral obligation should become binding on both believer and unbeliever alike. He maintains that theology should

'...concede that there is only one criterion for truth, and merge its efforts with those of science and philosophy, which recognise, at least formally, that their interest is in truth alone.'⁹⁷

It is, of course, open to question whether it is safe to assume that there is only one criterion of truth. In this Blanshard seems to overlook the variety of language.

Blanshard argues that man's nature is a mixture of reason and emotion, the head and the heart, and he maintains that theology has always trod a path between them; but he maintains that this vacillation and double allegiance cannot be sustained.⁹⁸ If, however, the recognition of these two aspects of man's nature is correct, and if theology's attempt to hold them in balance is also true, then this is a more valuable insight into man's behaviour than a disregard of emotion as a constituent part of man's nature and the consequent concentration on only one aspect of his nature, namely, his reason, when that

is not always operative or effective.

According to Blanshard, we do not need to look for a divine sanction for our moral behaviour, nor do we need a divine revelation for our knowledge of right and wrong; all we need to do is to look at our rich experience which is

'...a long experimentation with diverse patterns of life. What makes these fruits sweet or bitter is not a divine sanction accorded to some and withheld from others, nor the presence on occasion of a unique non-natural quality. It is something more deeply rooted in human nature.'⁹⁹

In place of a religiously inspired ethic, Blanshard proposes an ethical method which would deserve the allegiance of all thoughtful persons; this ethic can be expressed in a few maxims:

'So act as to produce the greatest net good. Take into account the good of everyone affected by your action, and in your calculations give to each man's good an importance equal to the like good of anyone else. Treat all goods as commensurable. Assume that an objective better and worse, and therefore right and wrong, are to be found.'¹⁰⁰

Although Blanshard had argued for the supremacy of reason, he does not demonstrate the rational origin of these maxims; they are a priori, and this quality at least makes them arbitrary. When we look at the moral ideals that have moved people in the past, we can see a certain similarity so Blanshard maintains, or a consensus of moral opinion

because,

'The great goods of men correspond to the great needs of men; they are the food that quenches his persistent, fundamental hungers.'¹⁰¹

But it is not at all clear whether this will be sufficient to form the basis of the moral maxims that he proposes. Furthermore, this will not answer the case for all moral ideals; for example, there is no great fundamental need to display heroism, or to tell the truth, or 'to treat all goods as commensurable.' If man is endowed with reason, he is required to be reasonable; but Blanshard recognises a difficulty here; it is impossible to be reasonable, but

'Fortunately, it is not one's duty to be infinitely and impossibly rational. It is one's duty only to be as rational as one can.'¹⁰²

It is interesting that this imperative has to be attenuated in order to be meaningful. Blanshard appears to promise an ethical method based on past experience, enlightened by man's reason; but it a promise that he does not fulfil.

In his examination of the place of reason in ethics, Toulmin states that there are three important facts about ethics:

1. Unless there can be "good reasons" for an ethical judgement, there is nothing to account for its incompatibility with opposed ethical judgements;
2. our feelings, especially feelings of approval and obligation, are closely bound up with our moral judgements;
3. the rhetorical force of ethical judgements is one of their most important features.'¹⁰³

Toulmin's approach, which is a search for 'good reasons' in ethics, considers the fundamental questions, 'What is the purpose of moral rules?' and 'What is the function of morals?' His approach seems to follow the method of the later work of Wittgenstein and attempts to place moral discourse in its proper context. Before considering what constitutes 'good reasons' in ethics, Toulmin deals with the question, 'What constitute "good reasons" in science?' This question can only be answered in terms of the reasons, arguments, and explanations which we do accept, namely, those which are predictively reliable, coherent and convenient. In scientific enquiry it is not possible to give up expectations based on past experience. There is a difference between scientific language and everyday language. For example, observing a sunset, the ordinary person will say that the sun is red, but the scientist will say that the sun is really yellow and appears red as a rate of electromagnetic vibration. But the scientist's explanation of the colour of the sun does not affect the perceived colour in any way. Scientific language has its obvious uses, but 'everyday language describes the objects of our experience in a way which serves our normal purposes perfectly well.'¹⁰⁴ There is no real contradiction between the two statements about the sun, they represent two different uses and different contexts. Just as there is no contradiction between scientific language and everyday language, so there is no contradiction between scientific

judgements and judgements of other kinds. If the artist looks at the sunset and sees tones of red, there is no material difference from the scientist who would prefer to account for the perceived colour in some other way, but rather:

'..it represents only a divergence between the modes of reasoning which they are using - the choice of mode being determined by their activities and interests.'¹⁰⁵

Toulmin is anxious to preserve the variety of language and discourse, each realm of discourse may have its own forms of reasoning. There is no single system of reasoning which alone can be described as 'valid' and demand that one dismiss others as 'invalid'.

There is an important similarity between the judgements of science and the judgements of ethics: they are both the result of experience. On the basis of past judgements and experiences of pain, felt or inflicted, we make subsequent judgements in order to avoid the pain felt by ourselves or the pain caused to others as a result of a wrong decision or action. The motive for our actions becomes less likely to be the satisfaction of our own immediate desires and needs, but tends towards other things

'...which we expect to bring deeper and more lasting contentment. In doing so, we develop a "rule of life", a personal "code" with the help of which, when moral considerations are no longer relevant, we can choose between different courses of action. In developing this

"rule of life" we have, of course, not only our own experience to guide us; we have the records which others have left of their attempts, failures and successes in the same quest, and the advice of friends and relatives to help us - or confuse us. Given all this mass of experience, we can now "reason" about the proposed courses of action.'¹⁰⁶

Thus in this way we build up a moral experience or a moral decision-making equipment. Our moral decisions are based on past experiences in a way similar to that of scientific reasoning; they are both causative and predictive. Moral principles derived from these moral experiences have an imperative value which can be modified in the light of subsequent experiences, and these moral principles enable us to 'approve and disapprove, praise and condemn, look forward to, hope for, seek, avoid, and fear different things.'¹⁰⁷

Unlike many moral theorists, Toulmin asks, 'What is the function of ethics?' He offers a provisional definition of that function:

'...to correlate our feelings and behaviour in such a way as to make the fulfilment of everyone's aims and desires as far as possible compatible.'¹⁰⁸

Ethics, according to Toulmin, must be located firmly in a community context; notions of 'duty' and 'obligation' are derived from situations in which the behaviour of one member of that community can prejudice the interests of another, and such notions are then to be understood as

part of the means whereby the effects of these conflicts can be minimised.¹⁰⁹

It is, however, pertinent to ask, 'Which community?' for each one of us is a member of more than one community. We are members of a community called the family, which has its own rules and conventions; we may be members of a profession having its own rules and conventions binding on those who belong to that professional community. We are members of a community of friends; as Christians, we are members of a larger community which has its commitments and demands; and we are members of the community or state. Each of these communities has its own rules and conventions which make demands upon us, and these demands do not necessarily coincide, indeed, they may even make contradictory demands. The problem for the moral agent is to decide which of these demands he is to respond to. The observance of certain demands within this set of over-lapping communities will depend on the rôle that we wish to play within one or more of the communities. The demands of professional ethics may be very strong for someone who is ambitious and wishes to make his mark in that profession; but another member of the same profession may want to lay greater emphasis on the conflicting demands of his friends, and decide that 'retaining his integrity' or 'remaining a real person' are more important objectives. The over-lapping communities have one thing in common, they are centred on one individual who is the common factor.

When a person responds to the various demands of these over-lapping communities, his response must be consistent and according to his character.

Toulmin sounds a note of caution concerning moral reasoning; it is one thing, he states, to have a reasonable argument, but it is quite another to observe the moral principle, because we are not always reasonable.¹¹⁰ He does not assume that the possession of a moral argument necessarily leads to moral action, nor that an analysis of moral language is sufficient for moral action, for one may still ask, 'Why ought one to do what is right?' This question is an example of what Toulmin calls a 'limiting question', that is, a question which is not answerable in terms of the apparent form of the question; to answer the question in the same terms seems to use will not satisfy the questioner. In order to answer 'limiting questions' one must wait and see what the questioner really wants. Thus, the one who asks, 'Why should I do what is right?' might want an answer which is appropriate to him, and so the answer is not universally applicable, or the answer cannot be literal and so it may take on 'the elusive, allusive quality of poetry.'¹¹¹ But this does not mean that 'limiting questions' have no value, on the contrary, they help us to accept the world as it is. They are not questions that seek a direct understanding of the world in scientific terms; such questions indicate a need for reassurance, as Berger has observed.¹¹² If religion is

understood to have the function of providing answers of an exact nature, and offering exact knowledge of the future, the same logical and empirical criteria must be applied to religious propositions as are applied to scientific propositions, and if this is done, religious propositions appear to be literal non-sense. It is important to realise that religious language has other functions to perform than competing with scientific propositions, for 'to reject all religious arguments for this reason is to make a serious logical blunder.'¹¹³ The significance of religious propositions is the faith or outlook that they express; the acceptance of a religious faith is the acceptance of a consistent world-view, an overall approach to the world and man's place within it, supremely expressed in the doctrine of creation.

Whereas Blansard works from man's reason, Gustafson, like Toulmin, works from man's experience. Basic for Gustafson are 'certain sorts of awareness, certain qualities of the human spirit.'¹¹⁴ From these senses man comes to articulate some belief about God; these senses are related to a belief that man has about life as a whole and his attitude to it. Each sense involves a disposition to act in certain ways. Gustafson gives examples of the correlations between these senses and their practical outcome. Thus, the sense of radical dependence is correlated to belief in God as Creator, just as the sense of gratitude is correlated to the belief in the goodness of God and of his creation. And the sense of

obligation is correlated to the experience of God as the sustainer of life. Moral principles may be inferred from these senses, for they have significant consequences for establishing a moral life. The working-out of these principles in moral behaviour is closely related to our attitudes towards other people and our beliefs about our place in life.

In his account of the relationship between religion and morality, Blanshard wanted to dismiss the conviction that a supernaturalist theology is a necessary support for moral behaviour, but Gustafson suggests that 'religion qualifies morality'. Toulmin expresses the relationship more forcefully:

'Ethics provides the reasons for choosing the "right" course: religion helps us to put our "hearts" into it.'¹¹⁵

5. Religion and morality: 2.

The relationship religion and morality is a problem that is not easily resolved. It is clear that historically there has been a close connection between morality and religious belief. Religious beliefs, it seems, do make a difference, because those beliefs affect the understanding of the human situation.

The secularising trend in theology, to which Blanshard referred with approval, has had a serious effect on moral theology. Secular theology has wished to adopt the secular for the glory of God. Although the desire to demand relevance for belief is understandable, the outcome has been destructive of Christian ethics as a distinctive way of life. The reason for this has been the confusion of ethics with apologetics; some have assumed that the non-Christian man of goodwill may have even greater moral insight than the Christian and, therefore, the Christian should abandon his previous moral notions and identify Christian morality with the morality of those outside the Church. Such an assumption implies that 'modern man' is free of all the perversities that have been characteristic of man from the beginning; and that proposition is difficult to accept. The project is in any case doomed to fail as apologetics, because it brings nothing to the dialogue; it merely proclaims to the secular world what the secular world has long known: that religion has nothing to do with the life of man and has nothing of

any relevance to say. This is not apologetics, but a dispirited lack of confidence.

In a number of essays, Hauerwas has attempted to redress the balance and to give credibility to a distinctive Christian ethic. Hauerwas has asked what difference it should make to the moral life to profess a specific religious belief. He has expressed concern for the nature of man, because the real interest of ethics should rest, not in the act itself, but in the reasons for acting in a certain way.

He maintains that the choices that a person makes determines who that person is, that is, by choosing to act in one way rather than another. Thus, choice is the centre of action, and for Hauerwas, character is determinative of our choice as well as its result. The real centre of interest for ethics should be character. Each of us has a range of actions and a range of reasons for those actions, and these action then reveal our character. This understanding of the significance of action as a revelation of character runs counter to the moral theology of Barth and Bultmann. Hauerwas sees little value in the existentialist approach to ethics advocated by Bultmann, and he observes that one of the basic problems in understanding the nature of the claims made in Protestant theological ethics is an uncertainty about how directly theological affirmations are to be taken to apply to human experience. Because man must always be ready to

deny his past in favour of God's ever-new future, in the existentialist analysis, this entails a denial of the significance of character in man's moral experience.¹¹⁶ According to Bultmann, man is essentially historical, that is, a man cannot be understood as an instance of general humanity, because there is no 'essential' self apart from the man who is acting and deciding. But, as Hauerwas points out, 'the character of man as deciding and enacting his being does not mean that he is simply the collection of his individual actions, for the human person cannot be recognised if, in the series of decisions, there is not a personal subject, an "I", which is deciding.'¹¹⁷ A man is not to be found in the decision or a series of decisions, a person is recognised in a personal subject. If a person is determined by each passing moment, it is difficult to speak meaningfully of man as an agent; the result is that

'...Bultmann's agent appears to be a lone individual, having no social context, who is made up of individual decisions in relation to strictly atomistic events.'¹¹⁸

The weakness of Bultmann's position is that it does not take into account man's nature, that is, what a man does is influenced by his past. As McIntyre has argued in After Virtue, any rational method for resolving moral disagreements requires a shared tradition that involves assumptions about the nature of man and his purpose; but the assumption of liberalism is that a just society requires that the individual be set free from all tradition.

The determination of an individual by his past is what Hauerwas means by 'character'; and 'character' is thus the context in which we are first disposed to ask: What is the right thing to do?¹¹⁹ The character is formed by the decisions that we make and at the same time our character determines the decisions that we take:

'As our agency is so determined, our character is, in effect, the cause of our actions, for it is our character that determines the range of descriptions that we have available to us.'¹²⁰

A person's actions are influenced by his intentions and beliefs, and he is disposed to having certain beliefs and intentions rather than others. And in acting in a certain way our character is revealed. A person's decisions are not made in a vacuum, they are part of his personal and social life.

Realising that it is important to state the relationship between beliefs and practices, Hauerwas has set out to examine that relationship. In his essay, Moral Notions, he notes that moral notions have a specific grammar and that by learning how to use them we discover how we order the world. Moral notions in this sense are not the product of abstract reasoning, they arise from experience of everyday life. Moral reasoning is not deductive from abstract principles, but analogical, and

'...what we do when we engage in moral reasoning is, by comparing cases, to try to find out what is common to the situations.'¹²¹

Thus, learning moral notions involves how we see the world, and 'the moral life is a struggle and training in how to see.'¹²²

If theology is the understanding and arrangement of religious notions, then theological ethics is the understanding of the moral significance of these religious notions. The function of religious notions is not only to inform us about the nature of existence, they must also imply how behaviour ought to be modified. The Christian moral life is not simply one of decision, but a life of vision which is determined by the religious and moral notions that are part and parcel of the Christian faith.

To be a Christian is to hold to specific beliefs that become determinative of character and action. A Christian has beliefs which present a way of seeing the world in a certain way. Thus the moral quality of a person's life is not determined by his observance of an external code of justice, but by the orientation of his character which consists of a way of understanding and describing the world and his place in it and which in turn affects his behaviour. The Christian moral life is a way of seeing the world, in particular, it is 'learning to see the world under the mode of the divine.'¹²³ This is the theological and moral significance of the doctrine of creation.

Hauerwas rightly considers that this

understanding of character provides the best means 'to discuss in a concrete way the relation between Christ and the moral life.'¹²⁴ He does not wish in any way to remove the mystery of sanctification, but rather to understand us as men loved by God. In sanctification God does not act contrary to his creation, but through it, that is, the sanctification of man does not come about through some other process than the change of ourselves, and thus

'..what distinguishes Christian sanctification from the ways men's lives are generally shaped and framed is not the process of formation itself, but the basis and consequent shape of that formation.'¹²⁵

This transformation of the person has certain results: first, it produces singleness or coherence; second, it may not be reduced to one particular programme of action, but is 'a general orientation of our own being';¹²⁶ third, this transformation involves not only our inner lives, but also our outward actions; and fourth, such a shaping of our character can reveal itself in our actions, because 'that which we do proceeds directly from the kind of persons we are, for what we are determines what we will and do.'¹²⁷

This approach meets head-on the vexed problem of the relationship between 'is' and 'ought', or, in Hauerwas' terms, the 'indicative' and the 'imperative'. The problem is usually discussed in terms that have little to do with the person who acts, and this is surely a mistake. If, instead, we consider the relationship between

'is' and 'ought' in terms of the character of the agent, the relationship becomes intelligible and acceptable; a person's character is shaped by his beliefs, and in consequence, his actions are determined by his character, thus the relationship between belief and action is clear:

'..the indicatives enter into the formation of our imperatives, as beliefs order and form that which we do.'¹²⁸

We cannot escape the process whereby our actions are determined by our character, they reveal the sort of person we are. If the Christian's character is transformed by his beliefs and his professed allegiance his actions will reveal that transformation.

6. The doctrine of creation and moral decision-making.

The doctrine of creation is a way of looking at the world theistically. The assertion that the world is created by God is a vision of the world 'sub specie divinitatis'. The adoption of this particular world-view as a part of Christian faith is to assert several things: that the created world is a mystery which evokes awe and wonder; that the world is contingent; that the world is rational and stable. The doctrine of creation is an organising image expressing meaning in diversity and goodness, in spite of the appearance of hostility.

Religious belief is more than the acceptance of certain propositions; it also involves commitment. And in the case of the doctrine of creation, the belief aids the discernment of the world as the work of God; and the world both conceals and reveals God. A work of art has an ambiguous message, since it offers a means of understanding the artist whose work it is and a means of appreciating the artist's vision of reality, and yet it is not a final and complete utterance of the artist. Every action is ambiguous, since it does not contain its own interpretation. Similarly, the created world is ambiguous; it can reveal and conceal God who created it; the world is not a final and complete utterance, nor does it contain its own interpretation. The doctrine of creation is an attempt to interpret the work of creation as the act of God, not merely a hopeful statement about

its origins.

Our increased knowledge of the development of the created order and of man's development within and from it will no longer permit an anthropocentric interpretation of the world and man's place in it. Man is embedded in the world, he shares with other animals a great deal in both his nature and his habitat. The doctrine of creation, properly understood, cannot support an anthropocentric view of the world. Man is in the world and is a part of the world; he is not its master; man is finite and contingent. Man is not the owner of the world nor its maker; he is, in the theological account, responsible to the Creator. Man's pride in his powers and potentialities is boundless, and an anthropocentric view of creation only serves to feed that pride.

There is much that man shares with other animals; the biological continuity between man and the rest of the created order is difficult to deny. This biological nature prescribes the physical parameters within which man can act; and his biological nature, to some extent, influences his actions, and man must share the world with other animals.

Against this realisation of the continuity between man and the animals, objections will be raised by the theist and the rationalist. The theist will object that this continuity ignores man's 'soul'; and the rationalist will object that the notion takes no account

of man's 'mind'. In each case, the objectors wish to maintain a radical difference between man and beast.

But that difference is more apparent than real. The reply to the theistic objector will need to consider the 'grammar' of 'soul'-language. It is true that propositions concerning the 'soul' are fraught with problems. The presentation of man in the Old Testament, granted its primitive psychology, does not predicate to man a 'soul'; man is a 'soul' or 'living being' by virtue of his possession of 'the breath of God'. Man is a soul, he does not have a soul. With the translation of the Old Testament into Greek and Latin, and its transition into a Greek-speaking and Greek-thinking world, the Hebrew 'nephes' is represented by the Greek 'psyche' and the Latin 'anima', since there were no other words that could be suitably appropriated. But this translation and transition brought with them associations of these words that were alien to the original usage of the Hebrew 'nephes'. The outcome was the idea that man possesses a 'soul' as a separate entity which then distinguishes him from other animals; the 'soul' could be isolated and identified.

When 'soul' ceased to have any validity in philosophical discourse, it was still necessary to maintain an essential difference between man and beast, and that difference was expressed in terms of man's possession of a 'mind', with the assumption that an animal does not possess a 'mind'. In such a context, 'mind' like

'soul', could be an evaluative term expressing, not an entity, but a short-hand means of describing the way in which man functions as a whole. The attempt to locate 'mind' in the physiology of the brain has so far failed to produce meaningful results, just as attempts to locate the 'soul' also failed. 'Mind' expresses the harmonious working of the characteristic functions of man's physical nature. Because 'soul' and 'mind' cannot be located or analysed in empirical terms does not require of us that we abandon 'soul'- or 'mind'-language. The way in which 'soul'-language functions in religious discourse might provide clues to the 'grammar' of 'mind'-language. Such terms may be used to express some evaluation of man as man. 'Soul' means that man has some value vis-a-vis God and for the theist this has moral implications for his behaviour towards his fellow-men. Even Aquinas' use of 'soul' in the discussion of the development of the unborn child suggests that at some stage the unborn child is of equal value with the child already born and therefore requiring the same care and protection. The 'soul' has nothing to do with the possession of some property, but it is the expression of that being's status before God. We need not go along with the rationalist too readily in his claim that only man has a 'mind' and in his denial that other animals have 'minds'. We claim to know that other people have 'minds' because of their behaviour and the expression of their thoughts and feelings. But we

do not deny to the deaf and dumb the possession of 'mind' merely on the grounds that they cannot speak. We can observe the purposeful behaviour of animals; but we do not have a shared language in which man and beast might express thoughts and feelings.

Religious propositions are not simple epistemic propositions, they have entailments and incompatibles. It could be maintained that it is not permissible to draw moral and evaluative inferences from an epistemic proposition such as, 'God created the world,' but the doctrine of creation is not an epistemic proposition; it is evaluative and from it flow evaluative propositions that have moral force.

The proponent of the doctrine of creation is required to acknowledge that the world is the work of God and that man and beast and other created things have their autonomous existences. The theist is required to treat all things with love or respect, and abandon a self-centred approach which regards others as means to ends.

It does not help here to raise the notion of 'rights' (which will be considered below in Section 3, Chapter 3). Not only is the language of rights notoriously vague and has become debased, but also our talk of rights is itself anthropocentric, for we speak as though we were a despot who could dispose of his subjects according to a whim, and bestow rights on those over whom he holds sway. The language of rights is rigid and based

on the reduction of all moral relationships to transactions in order to provide a moral approach to other autonomous things. Rather than a system of ethics reduced to transactions, it is more important and more liberating to have vision and empathy, realising that we share a created world with other created things.

III. The doctrine of creation and the ethics of life and death.

1. Introduction.

The doctrine of creation concerns the Christian's vision of the world in which the world is seen 'sub specie divinitatis', and it is the task of moral theology to discover a means of envisioning the world.¹ It has already been maintained that the doctrine of creation is an expression of awe and wonder at the otherness of things; and it draws attention to the way things are, and any moral theology derived from the doctrine of creation must take into account the present knowledge of the way things are. The doctrine of creation, like other expressions of belief, has moral entailments, and it suggests a respect for the otherness of things.

It would be possible to draw out the moral implications of the doctrine of creation with regard to issues of ecological concern. But that avenue of argument will not be pursued here.

It might also be possible to draw out the moral implications of the doctrine of creation for the treatment of animals. There have been changes in the treatment of animals which have been based on a better understanding of the behaviour of animals and on a changed attitude towards animals in which they are perceived as autonomous beings and not merely as useful tools or resources.

The 'animal rights' movement has questioned the attitude which has considered animals as merely available resources to be exploited for man's benefit; and it has maintained that animals also suffer pain. It is not necessary, however, to postulate 'animal rights', although the language of 'animal rights' probably expresses a change in attitude towards animals.

But some writers have observed that some aspects of ecological concern suggest an attitude of anti-people, for example, Hardin has written:

'If the space required to grow four redwood trees could be devoted to growing food for one person, we should say directly and bluntly that four redwood trees are more important than a person.'²

Some have gone on to argue, on inadequate evidence, that abortion should be practised to prevent a population increase which would seriously threaten the continued existence of trees, etc. It is strange that those most concerned for the well-being of young animals, eggs, etc. do not show the same concern for the unborn victims of abortion.

There have been much analysis and much discussion of abortion (though less of euthanasia), nevertheless there has been little progress towards a consensus and the arguments seem to have got nowhere. The reason for the failure to make progress has probably been changes of attitude which are not amenable to rational argument.

There have been changes in attitudes towards the unborn and towards women, and sometimes these attitudes are expressed in terms of 'rights': the 'right to life' and the 'rights of women to their own bodies'. At the same time as these changes in attitude, there have been developments in medicine which have created moral difficulties. Developments in medicine in themselves are morally neutral, but moral difficulties arise in the application of the developments. It is possible, for example, to allow the newborn to survive at an earlier stage of development, and the stage of viability has been pushed further back; it is possible to extend the life of the defective newborn child; and the life-span of adults has been extended, or the dying process has been postponed, by means of medical technology.

The doctrine of creation is concerned with attitudes towards what is, and so it is right that the arguments concerning abortion and euthanasia should be brought within the purview of that doctrine. The doctrine of creation is a means of interpreting the world and it involves respect for created things, and so abortion and euthanasia arouse religious issues. The doctrine of creation provides the narrative context within which moral decisions can be made and that context suggests that life is inherently good and that life is a gift.

On one occasion, Gustafson urged his audience not 'to deprive future generations of opportunities

for well-being', and afterwards he was asked, 'Can you arouse a genuine interest in the rights of those who do not exist without first establishing the rights of those who do?' Gustafson chose to ignore the question. De Marco, who reports this exchange, describes the underlying attitude expressed in Gustafson's statement as the 'fear of the actual'. He writes:

'...because the (abortion) movement gives more weight to what is not than to what is, such radical attachment must involve it more and more intimately with non-reality...The essential difference between the pro-abortion movement and its life-affirming countermovement is that the former is willing to dismiss certain human realities as if they were nothing and value the hypothetical as if it were real, while the latter is committed to affirming all human realities and honouring their primacy over what is not real.'³

It could be maintained that the concern for the possible ideal world, rather than with the real world is the outcome of an anthropocentric view of the world which sees the world as organised for the good of man and therefore an imperfectly ordered world in which man suffers should be re-organised to suit his interests. This anthropocentrism, in spite of its warm-hearted intentions, is not part of the doctrine of creation.

Abortion and euthanasia are religious issues because they involve the deepest attitudes about ourselves, others, and the world; but arguments for abortion

and euthanasia, which advocate the instrumental termination of human life for the good of the individual, society, or nation, undermine not only the dignity of human life, but also the respect for all life.

2. Abortion and the sanctity of life.

The issues involved in the discussion of abortion are complex, but one need not follow Curran here when he denies that faith has little or nothing to do with abortion.⁴ The arguments concerning abortion cluster around certain issues which must be considered in due course: the sanctity of life and the quality of life; the rights of the unborn child and the rights of the mother; and the definition of human. A Christian moral theology derived from the doctrine of creation cannot but be concerned with such a cluster of ideas, because such a moral theology is concerned with respect for living beings.

At the outset it must be recognised that abortion is the application of surgical procedures to effect the death of the foetus, or unborn child, and therefore the arguments used in its justification should demonstrate that such killing on the part of the physician is ethically justifiable.

The terms 'foetus' and 'unborn child' will be used here as equivalent and interchangeable terms, although it is recognised that both terms have evaluative and emotive overtones. It is a feature of the debate that the term 'foetus' has been taken out of its biological context and used as a means of not recognising that it is an unborn child. The intention is that it should be possible to speak 'objectively', that is, to refer to it as if it were not a living being - but if it were not a living being

with a semi-autonomous existence, abortion would not be necessary.

The principle of the sanctity of life recurs in the abortion debate. It is often recognised that this principle has its roots in a religious belief, and specifically in Judaeo-Christian belief.

Some writers, Singer for example,⁵ have contended that the principle of the sanctity of life is a late-comer on the theological stage and that it does not find its expression until it is articulated by Aquinas in the thirteenth century. But Noonan⁶ has clearly demonstrated that this contention is false, and it can only be maintained by ignoring the evidence. He has argued that the principle follows the condemnation of killing found in the Jewish tradition; and that a condemnation of abortion is to be found in the 'Didache' of the first century. The high value placed on human life by the Christian tradition in the early centuries must be seen against the background of the prevailing view of the cheapness of human life and of animal life. Singer is certainly right to draw attention to the high sentiments expressed by the Roman philosopher Seneca; but at the same time it does well to bear in mind the practices that provoked Seneca to protest so nobly against the brutality of Roman entertainments. Christian teaching on the value of human life developed in the face of a culture which showed indifference to the human life of the unborn child, and of the child, and of the adult. It was the

theological and moral development of belief in creation, incarnation and atonement.

With a view to the formation of a consensual legal framework, Callahan has maintained that a consensus is desirable and that such a consensus might be based on the principle of the sanctity of life, which has been so effective in the Western tradition. Callahan considers the background of the principle in the Christian tradition and he finds that it has some advantages. The principle suggests, he claims, that man's dignity lies outside the evaluation of others, because man's worth is conferred by God.⁷ The principle has its roots in the belief in God as Creator.⁸ But it is this foundation that gives rise to the greatest disadvantage of the principle of the sanctity of life: it has its origin in religious belief. Belief in God is not shared by the majority of people and therefore the principle cannot provide the basis for a consensual norm, because

'...an affirmation of the sanctity of life which requires that one accept a religious view of man's origin would provide a weak base upon which to build a consensus.'⁹

However, in spite of this reluctance, Callahan sees some value in the principle of the sanctity of life, because it is 'proto-religious' and it draws upon common human experience; and it represents 'the most that can be said about the value of life.'¹⁰

The advantage of the principle of the

sanctity of life within the Christian tradition is that it represents the value of life as independent of the valuation given by man, it is dependent upon God. Man is thus not forced to create his own worth, since that worth has been conferred by God from the beginning; and that evaluation by God acts as a command to man to value life in his turn. In Catholic and Protestant theology the sanctity of human life is derived from the belief in God as the Creator and Lord of life; and, for Callahan, this is

'..another way of proclaiming that man holds his own life in trust, of asserting that man's ultimate value stems from God and of saying that no man can take it upon himself in total mastery over the life of another.'¹¹

It might be thought that this would provide a basic moral principle for moral theology, but Callahan, whilst aware of its advantages for moral theology, does not regard the principle of the sanctity of life as a useful counter to be used in the public debate about abortion, and that is strange since he has already maintained that the principle draws on common human experience. Callahan's aim is the formation of a moral consensus and the principle has theological roots and connotations which render it ineffective for that task. But Callahan's ambivalence towards the principle is evident when he admits that the principle is significant, because

'..it is trying to say the most that can be said about the value of life. It signifies

a whole cluster of final meanings, each of which is related to and dependent upon the other to give it sense and significance.'¹²

Although the principle of the sanctity of life is indeterminate and vague, it is not without meaning; and it has a continuing strength drawn from common human experience.

It is this human experience that Brody calls upon in his defence of the principle of the sanctity of life. There is, he argues, a 'most fundamental moral intuition that it is wrong to take the life of another human being.'¹³ Of course, the principle can be modified in one particular: a person may defend himself, even to the point of killing another person, if his life is threatened.¹⁴ But it is not possible to describe the foetus as a threat to the mother's life; it is not responsible for an attempt on her life; and therefore the foetus is innocent, and the killing of the foetus cannot be included in the permitted exception.¹⁵ The full force of Brody's argument depends upon the recognition of the status of the foetus as another human being, and that aspect of the problem will be considered below, in Chapter 4.

The principle of the sanctity of life is grounded in Christian theology, and, as Ramsey has also argued, life is important because of the value placed on it by God as Creator.¹⁶ Ramsey's exposition of the principle is influenced by Barth's theology of creation, where he commends a respect for human life: '...a radical feeling

of awe at the mystery of all human life as this is commanded by God as its creator and giver.'¹⁷ It is possible that the principle will be cut loose from its theological sheet-anchor and interpreted as a rigid principle designed to protect all living matter, whatever its status. This vitalistic approach could then be abandoned in favour of a modification of the principle of the sanctity of life in the form of a concern for the quality of life. This would allow the restrictions of the former principle to be sufficiently relaxed so that the circumstances, actual or potential, of the foetus could be allowed to weigh against the absoluteness of the principle of the sanctity of life. Thus, if the foetus were diagnosed as likely to be born handicapped and that this condition would affect the child into adulthood, then it might be considered that the child's life would be impaired in quality, and compassion would then demand that the pregnancy should be terminated. Or the child might be born into a family already suffering from the results of poverty and neglect, and it might be reasonably predicted that the child's life would not be as rich and rewarding in those circumstances as might be desired; once more compassion might demand that the child's life should be ended before it begins to experience a life of inferior quality.

The passing of the Abortion Law Reform Act in 1967 was assisted by the earlier publication of the report on abortion by the Church of England Board for Social

Responsibility. That report concluded that, according to Christian ethics, it could be right to end the life of a foetus (1) where the mother's own life is in jeopardy as a result of the pregnancy; and (2) 'we would extend this justification of necessity to cover a real threat to the physical or mental health of the mother, that is, to her psycho-social well-being.' The 1967 Act seemed adopt this argument for it permitted abortion in certain circumstances:

'..when a pregnancy is terminated by a medical practitioner if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith - (a) that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of life of the pregnant woman, or of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or (b) that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.'

And Section 1 (2) continues:

'In determining whether the continuance of a pregnancy would involve such risk of injury to health..account may be taken of the pregnant woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment.'

The words 'serious' and 'grave' risk were dropped from the final version of the Act and a further clause was added which stated that 'the pregnant woman's capacity as a mother will be severely overstrained by the care of a child or of another child....' This change significantly altered

the scope of the legislation. Some medical practitioners are of the opinion that any unwanted pregnancy creates some risk to the mental health of a pregnant woman, and so they are prepared to authorise termination. The outcome, whatever the original intention, has been tantamount to abortion on demand.

It is not difficult to imagine instances where the birth of a child would have an effect on the economic and domestic circumstances of the mother and of other children in the family; but it is more difficult to imagine circumstances where the birth of a child would seriously affect the health of the other children. It has become normal practice for some medical practitioners to use the clause to justify abortion, when the real reason has been the economic and domestic circumstances of the family or the mother. The outcome has been that the sanctity of the life of the unborn child has been compromised by the alleged health of the other children.

This justification of abortion has its attractions for it arouses sympathy and compassion for the mother and the other children. This justification can appear to claim to be based upon a Christian virtue of 'love'. But it is a charade; for the aim can only be achieved at the expense of another. It is a thinly disguised utilitarianism. It is an example of what de Marco has called 'the fear of the actual and preference for the possible.'¹⁸

In the first full year after the passing of the reform legislation (1969), there were 54,013 terminations officially notified.¹⁹ In 1983 the number of notified terminations had risen to 127,000.²⁰ Of these, 58% were performed on single women, and a further 33% were performed on women under the age of 20. These figures do not suggest a greater concern for the health of the mothers or for the health of the children; whatever the original intentions of the Act, this does suggest 'abortion on demand.'²¹

The 1967 Act permits abortion if the registered practitioners are of the opinion that 'there is a substantial risk' that the foetus has abnormal characteristics, and that the child would be 'seriously handicapped'. Improvements in medical technology have made it possible to predict, with a fair degree of accuracy, that a certain child would be born deformed. But it has been noted that two methods used, amniocentesis and fetoscopy, are not without risk to the foetus. When a deformed foetus is diagnosed, there arises a conflict between the principles of the sanctity of life and the quality of life. The problem is acute for the compassionate medical practitioner, who may ask whether this unborn child should be brought to term when the doctor is aware of the problems that both the child and its parents will have to face. According to the principle of the sanctity of life, the child should be brought to term. But the principle of the quality of life

requires that due consideration should be given to the suffering of the parents and of the child, and therefore the pregnancy should be terminated. This problem is not easily resolved. McCormick argues that judgements concerning the quality of life ought to be made with an overall reverence for life; they should be an extension of one's view of the sanctity of life, because

'..there are times when preserving the life of one with no capacity for those aspects of life that we regard as human is a violation of the sanctity of life.'²²

In this way McCormick wishes to retain the principle of the sanctity of life whilst leaning towards the quality of life. His judgement rests upon the definition of 'human', but the significance of this definition will be considered below. McCormick goes on to distinguish between 'person' and 'life'. Whilst admitting that 'every person is of equal value', he does not accept that 'every life is of equal value'. In drawing this distinction, McCormick uses a minimalist definition of 'life' so that it comes to mean 'the continuation of vital processes'; and 'value' means 'a good to the individual concerned'. When the terms are unpacked in this way, then it is, he claims, 'simply false to say that every life is of equal value.'²³ In his usage, 'equal' means 'identical in treatment', and so discrimination in treatment can be made if the centre of the decision-making is what is of benefit to the patient 'described largely in terms of quality of life criteria.'²⁴

However, it is not self-evident that in the statement, 'Every life is of equal value', a distinction can be made between 'life' and 'person'. In the normal way in which the statement is used, the terms are identical and the attempt to draw a distinction between the terms is specious and designed to permit the operation of the principle of the quality of life.

It has to be recognised that the principle of the quality of life has some tempting advantages. It seems to offer a means of solving a difficult problem by appealing to compassion, which is considered to be a Christian virtue. But the principle contains some unexpressed assumptions. The quality of life is not defined; and so it is not clear what would constitute the minimum quality of life. It is notoriously difficult to define health, and equally it is difficult to say at what point of the scale of handicap the unborn child's life would become not worth living. Kennedy has suggested that there is a moral danger in following an approach which leads to the conclusion that the handicapped should not be born:

'...such a pursuit of the handicap-free child might inevitably make us less tolerant of that child who, for whatever reason, is not caught by the screening process. Is such a child to face a future as a freak or a reject, shunned because such children are just not born like that any more?'²⁵

The quality of life principle inevitably introduces the language and ideology of quality control. Those goods or

products, in this case the foetus, which do not meet the standard requirement, are then to be rejected as of no value. It is often said that the techniques of pre-natal diagnosis are morally neutral; but, as two American medical practitioners have observed, the use made of these techniques indicates that the claim is false.²⁶ They observe that the techniques are used so that those diagnosed might be removed. Medical techniques are usually used for the benefit of the patient, but in the case of pre-natal diagnosis this is not the case:

'The primary concern is that, as currently viewed and practised, fetoscopy is not directed to the benefit of the fetus but to others - family and society. It seems to be a "search and destroy" operation, a technique to identify a fetus with certain genetic defects so that he/she can be aborted at the will of the mother.'²⁷

Inevitably, this application of pre-natal diagnosis affects the perception of others as being less than perfect, and it 'communicates worthlessness to the already existing handicapped persons whose self-images can be severely traumatised by the realisation that society does not really want them.'²⁸ Nor would that be the end of it; the healthy child who survives the screening programme might come to the conclusion that his or her value depends on his or her physical or mental acceptability to parents and society and any subsequent illness or injury would produce feelings of worthlessness or even guilt of having been born. The great disadvantage of the principle of the quality of life is that it gives rise to a cult of perfection which is, as Diamond

has observed, not an ethic of life, but an ethic of death.²⁹

It has to be assumed that a child has a certain worth and that it should be born only if it qualifies as a being of worth. An ethic of means and ends would be satisfied by a form of 'the labour theory of value', so that the unborn child would be valued as it developed and became the focus of the aspirations of others. A fully 'human' existence would be defined in terms of physical and mental perfection and the ability to fulfil the aspirations of others. The handicapped child once born might not fulfil those aspirations and therefore he/she would be a 'disappointment' and consequently of less value than the perfectly formed child. But,

'. . . it is God's labour, his purpose, his economy which places the price of each life so high that no transient human value can serve as compensation.'³⁰

The principle of the quality of life implies a derogation of life and a rejection of the goodness of creation. It cannot be appropriate for the Christian to claim that all creatures are the work of the Creator, and then add the proviso which excludes from that evaluation those who do not come up to a culturally-defined standard; or to claim that all are the children of God, provided that they pass a test of quality. As Hauerwas rightly suggests, we should not burden the unborn child with adult prejudices of what constitutes life.³¹

The principle of the sanctity of life is

related to or derived from an over-all world-view, usually a religious one. For the Christian, the world-view is one in which creation by God should play a foundational role. Life in all its forms comes from God, and its value is God-given. Starting with the doctrine of creation, the Christian's position is one of awe at the mystery of life and respect for the autonomy of the being of others; indeed, the basis for any moral community is the ability to respect the being of others, and in this respect the sanctity of life is the starting-point for the moral assessment of abortion.³²

3. Abortion and rights.

It is unfortunate, but true, that the language of rights has entered the discussion of abortion; and there are protagonists for the rights of the unborn child and for the rights of the woman. As the discussion has shifted but become no clearer in the resolution of the moral problems of abortion, the language of rights has become more strident, leading to a dialogue of the deaf.

The concept of rights has been well considered elsewhere,³³ and this is not the place to rehearse those arguments. The concern here will be to consider rights only in so far as they impinge on the discussion of abortion.

It is often claimed that it only makes sense to speak of rights in the context of society, and a legal right is the claim of an individual upon others, recognised by the state. Unless there are others to acknowledge the rights of A, there would be no point in making the claim to possess rights, since they represent a claim against others, and thereby express a duty incumbent upon B and C towards A. 'It is obvious that there is no meaning in an individual's right unless there are corresponding duties imposed on other individuals.'³⁴ Thus, rights and duties may be said to be correlative since duties may be implied in rights, even if the duties are not specified. It is, however, unclear what duties are generated by the

claim of a right to an abortion. It probably does not mean that a certain medical practitioner has a duty to perform the abortion.

It has been claimed that each of us has an absolutely fundamental political or moral right to equal concern and respect. This right is not conferred by community legislation, but it inheres in the mere fact of being human, and moral rights cannot be as precisely specified as legal rights. If there are 'natural rights' which necessarily depend upon human nature, it is necessary to stipulate what it is about human nature that becomes normative for the postulation of these rights. It may be rationality, or the possibility of forming relationships, or sentiency, or some other quality that human beings possess, solely or pre-eminently. But the postulation of rights then depends upon a suitable definition of 'human', and since there are difficulties in attaining an adequate definition that is itself free of value judgements, the search is difficult or in vain. If the possession of rights depends upon a definition, a person who does not come within that definition is deemed not to possess rights and thus the right is not absolute. The twentieth century is replete with examples of those who have been 're-defined' as 'non-persons' and as having no rights. In the case of abortion, the foetus can be defined as not being 'human' or a 'person' and therefore as having no right to life, for only a 'person' (as yet undefined) has the right to life.

The claim to have a right to an abortion may be claimed on the basis of a right to equal concern. But that will not do, unless one goes on to deny the existence of a discrete being, the foetus. If the foetus is a separate cellular structure with its own being, there are two parties who have a right to equal concern, the mother and the foetus. In order to resolve this conflict of rights, an appeal must be made to some other moral principle, perhaps to some utilitarian principle or to a duty to care for the unprotected or to compassion for the mother or to concern for the autonomy of another being.

If the right to abortion is exercised, it can only be done at the expense of the infringement of the rights of others, the medical practitioner or of the foetus. It is not obvious that the rights of the doctor and of the unborn child should be waived in order that the mother's alleged right should be exercised. If those rights are waived, then they are not inherent nor absolute. If a woman has a right to abortion, it must be the case that the woman who decides against abortion, for whatever reason, is waiving her right. It is not clear what is being appealed to when a woman claims to have a right to abortion. It is not a legal right and no appeal can be made to the legal framework of the 1967 Act, since that Act does not grant a legal right to an abortion, but only a conditional permission. It cannot be a natural right when it can also be claimed by the infertile woman that she has a right to

have a child.

The claim has to be modified. Thomson³⁵ has claimed that a woman has a right to her body and that her body must not be used for the benefit of others. The foetus' right to life includes the right to the continued use of the mother's body. Thomson claims that the foetus does not have that right; therefore, the foetus's right to life cannot include the right to be linked to the woman's body. But the only way in which the foetus can be denied the use of the woman's body is by killing it, and that is something she does not have the right to do. The only way in which the woman is to regain control of her body is by killing the foetus and if that foetus is a discrete being then the woman does not have the right to do so. The claim to have a right to be in control of what happens to one's body cannot be supported by anyone who presupposes that there is some point in development beyond which the foetus is a human being, because people do not have the right to do anything, including killing, to regain control of their bodies. That right is restricted to instances of extreme physical threat, and it cannot be seriously claimed that the foetus poses a serious physical threat. Such cases, thanks to advances in medical practice, are now rare.

Thomson's argument might have more force if the invasion of the mother's body were undertaken without her knowledge or permission. But pregnancy is the outcome of sexual intercourse, and the woman can hardly claim that

the invasion took place without her knowledge or consent (except in cases of rape). It might be further argued that because the foetus has come into existence through the woman's act of sexual intercourse, it therefore owes its existence to the woman and what she once gave she may now take away. If, however, this were to be true of the foetus, then it should also be true of the new-born and for the adult; but no such claim is made, nor would it be tolerated. The argument assumes that the woman's initial act gives a special right to harm the foetus, provided that this action serves her interest. (It is noticeable that at this point in the argument no mention is made of the man's role in the sexual act, which is not a solitary action. If the mother claims a right to determine the outcome of her action, then the father ought to have a claim to determine the outcome of his action.) No such right obtains between mother and child, indeed, moral principle and law protect the child from this form of abuse. The law grants that the parent has some rights with regard to the child, but it also assumes that those rights are exercised in the interests of the child and not contrary to them. Mere possession of the child confers no special rights, although it may impose some duties, and certainly it does not confer a right to harm or kill the child. Furthermore, if the mother's action brought the child into existence, she then has a special obligation to preserve the child.

The argument proposed by Thomson maintains

that the woman has a right to control over her own body and a right to do what she likes with her own body. Those rights might be granted without granting a right to abortion. The basic proposition is false: the foetus is not her body. The foetus is not a part of the woman's body in the same way that one of her organs is a part of her body. The biological data show clearly that from conception the foetus is distinct in its cellular structure from the cellular structure of the mother. The foetus may be, by biological accident, inside her body, but it is not a part of her body.

It might be argued that a woman's claim to have a right to abortion is really a claim of a right to exercise her sexual freedom, and that in denying the first one is denying the second. Clearly this raises other issues of the exercise of human sexuality and the acceptance of moral responsibility for one's actions which cannot be considered here.

It has not been established that a woman, beyond mere sloganising, has a right to abortion. Equally, the foetus's right to life is no easier to establish. Although the foetus has no self-evident right to be brought to term, it is not in breach of any duty in coming into being, nor in remaining in the womb:

'The fact is that both persons share in the use of the body, both by the same sort of title, viz. that this is the way that they happened to come into being.'³⁶

If it is granted that the foetus has a right to be in the

womb, the mother has a duty towards the foetus. And so Benn argues that since the mother is the only person who can sustain the life of the foetus, the mother is the only person who is capable of responding to the right of the foetus to live, as the only person possible who is capable of doing anything about it.³⁷

Attempts to deny the foetus the right to life also have their difficulties. Tooley, for example, denies this right by distinguishing between the concept of 'a human being' and the concept of 'person'. He maintains that the right to life belongs to a 'person' and not to a 'human being'. Although Tooley does not stipulate what properties would be sufficient to require a right to life, the argument has the advantage of avoiding a cut-off point during pregnancy after which the foetus is regarded as a person. Benn proposes a minimum condition: an individual has a right to something only if it is the case both that he is capable of desiring it and that if he does desire it other individuals would be under a 'prima facie' obligation to refrain from denying it to him.³⁸ The effect of this condition would be to deny the right to life to the foetus as well as the new-born child. The fault in the argument is that the standard for decision-making is the adult human being, and a fairly reflective and intelligent one at that. It is pertinent to ask at what age a child is equipped with a concept of self as 'a subject of experiences and other mental states' and is capable of desiring to go on being a

'continuing entity', which Tooley regards as essential for the status of person. The psychological evidence for the fulfilment of these conditions is far from clear; and Tooley offers no opinion.

The appeal to rights has been seen as a protest against utilitarianism, but it is a 'really desperate' move.³⁹ Callahan has rightly observed that the language of rights is not a fundamental language which cannot be translated into any other language.⁴⁰ The right to life, for example, presupposes and articulates a valuation of life. To speak of a right to life only makes sense in a context in which life is regarded as valuable. In medical ethics the language of rights is of little help because it does not resolve those dilemmas in which rights conflict. To resolve those dilemmas, appeal must be made to other moral principles, and so the alleged rights are not fundamental.

The appeal to rights is meant to provide a ground for a variety of particular moral stances. But MacIntyre considers that there are no such rights, because 'every attempt to give good reasons for believing that there are such rights has failed.'⁴¹ The claims made for 'natural' rights are presented as though rights are self-evident truths but the existence of self-evident truths is now considered very doubtful. Rights have ceased to have any value in moral discussion; their constant use in the language of protest has largely evacuated them of all meaning, and it

would be more profitable to abandon all appeal to rights.

There is a danger that if appeal is made to rights, the moral argument goes by default, because if the basis for the claim to have rights is rejected, then the rest of the claim expressed in the alleged right falls like a pack of cards. There is no real necessity to appeal to rights at all, because

'If rights are not put forward on the basis of agreed moral principles, with the result that we do not agree as to whether there are such rights, then they will not serve to protect the weak and defenceless.'⁴²

On the other hand, if rights are proposed on the basis of agreed moral principles, there was clearly no necessity to claim a right, since those moral principles would already be a guide to right action.

The use of rights in the discussion of abortion is of little value; in the conflict between the rights of the foetus and the rights of the mother little enlightenment is gained and ultimately recourse must be made to some other moral principle.

4. Abortion and the status of the foetus.

The applicability of the principle of the sanctity of life in the discussion of abortion appears to rest upon a satisfactory definition of the foetus; similarly, the ascription to the foetus of a right to life appears to rest upon a definition of the foetus as a 'person'; for if the foetus is not a 'person', there would be no conflict between the rights of the foetus and the rights of the mother.

There are two approaches that can be made in the assessment of the foetus. The first approach considers the biological and physiological data. The second approach is concerned with a belief that the human 'person' is more than a biological organism; the human 'person' is a social phenomenon, and so 'the appearance of activity in the central nervous system, completion of brain structure, viability, etc., are all biological events. Yet they have a special socio-cultural significance.'⁴³

Each approach depends upon a definition. A definition may be either a verbal definition, that is, it specifies the way in which a particular word may be used, or a 'conditional' definition, that is, it specifies the conditions that must be satisfied before an entity can be included in a particular class of entities. Thus 'foetus' could be defined in biological terms, specifying the way in which the term may be used; and 'person' may be defined in

a conditional way specifying the conditions that must be satisfied. To ignore this difference between definitions is to thwart discussion of the morality of abortion. Furthermore, a definition may have a function, either implicit or explicit. Thus, a verbal definition may simply describe what is being referred to when that particular term is being used; and so the foetus is described in biological terms. Or a definition may have a 'conditional' function, so that, for example, the term 'person' can only be used when certain criteria of 'person' are satisfied; and those criteria can be set in such a way that the foetus would not satisfy those criteria, and that was the function of the definition. This second kind of definition will preclude any moral discussion of abortion since the classification of 'person' has been so restricted that the foetus will not satisfy the criteria and the foetus is therefore beyond moral consideration which is reserved for 'person'.

In his discussion of abortion, Fletcher uses physiological data to establish the criteria of 'human-ness', but in doing so he establishes the criteria of 'person' rather than of 'human'. Fletcher maintains that without the synthesising function of the cerebral cortex, a person is non-existent, because 'neo-cortical function is the key to human-ness, the essential trait, the human "sine qua non".'⁴⁴ He understands the function of the cerebral cortex to be 'thought' or 'mind', but this is a restricted description of its function, for it is

concerned also with learning, memory and the co-ordination of other behaviour. It has been demonstrated by means of electro-encephalography that the cortex of the foetus is active in the sixth week after fertilisation. Of course, the cortex is not functioning in the sophisticated way to which Fletcher wishes to draw attention, and there is little evidence to suggest that the cortex of the new-born child is yet functioning in that way, and yet Fletcher does not argue that on this basis it would be permissible to end the life of the new-born child. It is true that the proposal that electrical activity in the cortex should be a criterion of being alive forms an instructive symmetry with the criterion of death, that is, when such activity ceases; but the analogy is inadequate, because whereas the lack of cortical activity at death is irreversible, the lack of cortical activity in the foetus (before the sixth week after fertilisation) is only temporary. Fletcher's aim is to argue in favour of abortion, and he makes his criteria sufficiently demanding that a foetus would not qualify as a 'person'. He has used a 'conditional' definition. It is noticeable that Fletcher uses the terms 'human-ness' and 'person' as if they were equivalent. The physiological data can establish that the foetus is 'human' in the sense that it is a member of the human species, and so the data are essential for the construction of a 'verbal' or descriptive definition: the foetus is of the human species rather than of some other species. But the criteria for

'person' are not established by means of the same physiological data, unless 'human' and 'person' are equivalent terms, and yet this is what Fletcher wishes to avoid. It may be true that a 'person' must be a member of the human species, but there are uses of 'person' in which the biological and physiological data are not relevant for the understanding of that term (for example, in corporate bodies or legal 'persons').

It is possible to say that being a 'person' means exercising those potentialities that one possesses as a 'human being'. Thus, A might exercise his verbal and logical skills in devising or solving a crossword puzzle, but B does not. The fact that A exercises his skills does not mean that A is a person whilst B is not. Nor would A cease to be a person should he fail to solve the puzzle or to exercise those particular skills. A 'person' must belong to a species of rational or self-conscious beings; even if some do not appear to be rational or self-conscious, they are recognisably members of a species which has the potentialities of rationality and self-consciousness. The foetus is undeniably a member of such a species which has the characteristics of rationality and self-consciousness, therefore it is both human and a person.

We may now return to the two fundamental areas of concern mentioned above. Those who would argue against abortion tend to use the biological data to draw attention to the continuity of the foetus, from fertilisation

to parturition. They might also use the science of genetics to show that the foetus is a genetically discrete entity, distinct in its genetic structure from its mother. Further, it could be said that the conceptus is an informational speck containing all that it will become, only to be modified to some extent by its environment. On the other hand, those who would argue in favour of abortion might wish to draw a distinction between the foetus as a human being qua a biological phenomenon and a human being qua person and in doing so make use of the stages of development of the foetus. Thus, it was thought that 'quickening' indicated the presence of a human being worthy of care and respect, that is, a person. But 'quickening' is no longer useful as an indicator and it has been replaced by viability. However, medical techniques have made viability no longer a fixed point at, say, twenty-eight weeks, from which one may conveniently establish the significance of the foetus. It is possible to treat medically the foetus whilst still in the womb and the use of such treatment perceives and requires that the foetus is a patient in need of medical care independent of its mother. The argument in favour of viability rests upon the assumption that after this point the child is no longer dependent upon its mother for its continued existence. But the new-born child is dependent upon either its mother or some other caring adult. It is not self-evident that viability and the end of dependence should confer humanity on the child. Persons in adult life

may be dependent upon the ministrations of others in varying degrees, and yet one would hesitate to declare that their dependence requires the forfeiture of their humanity and their status as persons.

The second area of concern is sometimes referred to as 'hominisation', that is, the characteristic of being human is the ability to form and to sustain relationships. We are, the argument runs, social beings and the perception of ourselves is socially created, and the status that we have as persons is derived from our interaction with others in society. This approach has the attraction that it can be supported by developmental psychology, but it has its limitations. If humanity depends upon social recognition, then that same humanity can be denied when that recognition is withdrawn, and whole groups could be de-humanised. If humanity depends upon social recognition, there is a precedent for 'excluding other groups in the name of the consciousness or perception of the controlling group in society.'⁴⁵ There is a way open to exclude some from humanity and there is an opportunity to dispose of those excluded in whatever way is thought fit.

McCormick modifies the 'hominisation' argument and appeals to a distinction between 'human life' and 'humanised life'. According to McCormick, a person is defined and shaped in terms of his interaction with others and in those interactions he discovers and exercises his individuality, and the foetus is 'a kind of injunction to

the parents' who are called upon to recognise the foetus, and it is this recognition which 'humanises' the foetus. If the parents refuse to 'humanise' the foetus, the biological life is separated from the 'humanised' life; and such action would be intolerable.⁴⁶ But McCormick's argument fails to convince, because some parents may refuse to 'humanise' in this way, and prefer to regard the pregnancy as a burden, and the child is regarded as 'unwanted'. It is too arbitrary that humanity should depend solely upon the recognition of others, whether during pregnancy or during adult life. Can it really be the case that someone who is unrecognised and rejected by others should be deprived of his humanity and cease to be a person?

The question: When does human life begin? could be given an answer in biological terms, so that it could be said that human life begins at fertilisation or implantation in the womb. But the same question could be what Toulmin called a 'limiting question', that is, the question is not asking for specific information about beginnings. The question is really asking: At what point do I describe the foetus as 'human' and ascribe to it the care and concern that are due to a 'person'? This might suggest that the terms 'human' and 'person' could be used in the discussion of abortion as equivalent or non-equivalent terms. The use made of these terms will largely depend upon the intention of the person who uses them; that aim will determine their meaning. The scientific data are neutral,

but the appeal to that data is influenced by evaluative presuppositions. Thus the protagonist of abortion might emphasise the later stages of pregnancy and birth as significant events of social and moral significance. But the antagonist of abortion might also appeal to biological data and emphasise the biological continuity of the foetus and deny the possibility of choosing one moment in the foetus's development when the foetus is more, or less, human. The use of the terms 'human' and 'person' as referring to different entities in the moral argument of abortion is not really useful, since 'human being' and 'person' are really code words which already contain evaluations of the foetus. There is no need to have more information in order to determine the definition of the foetus; the information that we already possess makes it clear that a creature with a potential for separate development and which has a different cellular structure from both parents has started to develop as a human being.

The important question is: How ought a creature to be treated? When all the scientific data have been established, and the development of the foetus has been described, there yet remains the question of how this developing creature is to be treated. At this point it is relevant to draw attention to one aspect of the argument in favour of the better treatment of animals. The question here is not whether animals are intelligent or whether they can talk, but, Can they suffer? The evidence

is sufficient that a positive answer can be given, animals do suffer, they can feel pain. There is now sufficient evidence that the foetus also suffers pain.⁴⁷ On the analogy of the ascription of rights to animals on the grounds that they suffer, rights should also be ascribed to the foetus.

No matter what appeals are made to the biological and physiological evidence concerning the uniqueness of the foetus, the evidence does not really affect the status of the foetus. What is important, according to Hauerwas, is 'whether we deny significant aspects of our own being by our failure to regard and treat the foetus as life' in our support for abortion.⁴⁸ The foetus does not possess all the characteristics that are associated with humanity, when humanity is defined according to the paradigm of the healthy and intelligent adult. Nevertheless, the foetus' 'physicality represents the necessary basis for any possible form of what we think of as "fully human"'.⁴⁹ Thus, to recognise the foetus as human is a way of indicating our own essential physicality. There is a temptation to assume that 'real' humanity, or the 'real person' is something more than the physical; but this is a temptation to a new 'gnosticism' which appeals 'to our most refined aesthetic and ethical tastes to indicate what makes human life truly human.'⁵⁰

The physicality of man's existence is important because its constraints and possibilities provide

'the necessary condition for regarding life precious and worthwhile.'⁵¹ Our physicality is not a separate part of our existence; it is not a merely incidental aspect of our standing before God. It has been noted in Section 1 that the doctrine of creation draws the Christian's attention to the significance of man's contingency and physicality. Consequently, the Christian should be biased towards the foetus.

The morally important question in justifying abortion is whether 'we have denied significant aspects of our own being by our failure to regard the foetus as human life.'⁵² If attention is given to the physical continuity of the development of the foetus that at least gives intelligibility to the consideration of conception as the starting-point of human life.

5. Abortion and Euthanasia.

The central concerns of both abortion and euthanasia are matters of life and death and the assessment of human life. If the permissibility of abortion is granted, there are fewer grounds, it could be argued, for objection to the ending of human life, either soon after birth or at the end of a worthwhile life.

The connection between abortion and euthanasia was observed by Dunstan:

'The two are logically connected, in that both presuppose the same right over life; and both are demanded in terms of liberalisation of the law.'⁵³

And Singer, from a different standpoint, draws the two areas together and on a 'total' utilitarian view argues that abortion is acceptable when there are reasons to think that the foetus would be born defective. Birth, he maintains, 'does not mark a morally significant dividing line', and so there is no reason to argue that the new-born infant may not be 'replaced':

'There is no logical basis for restricting parents' choice to these particular defects [those detectable by means of amniocentesis]. If defective newborn infants were not regarded as having a right to life until, say, a week or a month after birth it would allow us to choose on the basis of far greater knowledge of the infant's condition than is possible before birth.'⁵⁴

But there is no reason why one should stick to the arbitrary period of one week or even one month after birth. Since the reason which Singer gives for the disposal of defective infants is to minimise the 'dis-pleasure' of the parents, there is no reason why parents should not dispose of their children when they contribute to their 'dis-pleasure'. The task of bringing up children is often burdensome and it often contributes to parents' 'displeasure', and so it might be sensible to wait until the main outlines of a child's personality are discernible by the age of five years, and before the child can be thought of as having any right to life, because it has not yet developed Singer's main criterion of 'an individual capable of regarding itself as a distinct entity with a life of its own to lead.'⁵⁵ In general, Singer opines that 'killing a defective infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person.'⁵⁶ It is not wrong, that is, according to his criterion of contributing to the total 'pleasure' of the majority, and the child's defectiveness deprives it of being a 'person'.

It is commonly agreed that one reason for the demand for the liberalisation of the strictures of the law against killing has been the development of medical technology. This technology has granted the medical practitioner the means to prolong life (or defer death). The medical practitioner has the means, but the question remains whether and in what circumstances those means should be used. As lesser diseases have been brought under control,

people's life-span has increased, but that has been a mixed blessing because people suffer increasingly from debilitating conditions resulting from the deterioration and decline of bodily functions.

The pattern of medical treatment has also changed, so that more people die in hospital rather than at home. Since the end of the Second World War, almost 75% of deaths occur in hospital rather than at home. Whilst patients are in hospital, there is a greater availability of medical technology that can be used to forestall the death process; the cessation of breathing and of heart-beat are no longer sufficient criteria of death, since technology can be used to continue those functions and even restore them. Since more people die in hospital at the end of longer lives, there has developed a changed attitude to death. Death in the family home is a less frequent experience; the demand is often made that the doctors 'should do something', and with the availability of the technology, they feel constrained to 'do something'. In its turn, this has changed the perceived role of the doctor: the medical profession has presented itself as scientists who are able to solve problems, and faced with the prospect of a patient's death, the medical practitioner must 'do something' or be seen by others and also by himself to have 'failed' in his resolution of this problem.

There are two main areas in which euthanasia is sometimes sought. The first concerns the

severely handicapped child; and the second concerns the incurably ill for whom the prognosis is poor.

6. Euthanasia and the defective new-born.

With regard to severely handicapped children, there are broadly three situations that have presented the most concern. First, there is the child who is born anencephalic or with so little developed cortex that the prospect of a life that most people would consider normal is minimal. In such cases, little can be done, and so little is done, except the alleviation of pain, in so far as this is possible. The child is often 'allowed to die.'

The second situation concerns the child born with spina bifida, often associated with the distressing condition of hydrocephalitis. It is possible in some case for a series of surgical operations to be performed which can alleviate the condition. But there are degrees of severity in the condition and in the most severe cases the prognosis of a normal life is poor. Even the least severely affected child must undergo painful surgery over a period of at least two years and parents have to endure the prolongation of the child's distress. Only a few children are chosen for surgery and Lorber has aroused controversy with his method of 'selective surgery' and his decision that those children not chosen for surgery should be 'allowed to die'.

The third situation involves children born with Down's Syndrome and whose condition is aggravated

by duodenal atresia. In many cases, the child's atresia can be relieved by means of simple surgery; but without such surgery the child will die through loss of blood and inability to take in food. It is often urged that children in this condition should not receive corrective surgery because their other condition of Down's Syndrome provides a poor prognosis, and the 'quality of life' for such children will always be in doubt. Instead, the child should be 'allowed to die'.

There is said to be a significant difference between killing and letting die. That difference is said to rest in the difference in intent. But Rachels⁵⁷ has challenged this notion and he has maintained that there is no difference because the result is the same. Indeed, there is little difference in the intention: in both cases the intention is the bringing about of the patient's death. There is, perhaps, a difference between a direct means and an indirect means; but, in the main, it would be more honest to remove this specious difference. The important point is: what is done for the good of the patient, what is done in his interests, in so far as they can be reasonably ascertained.

But the problem is not resolved as simply as that. For, as Ladd has shown,⁵⁸ it is not enough to think that there might be a difference between killing and letting die. The question ought to be: When and under what

circumstances is letting something happen culpable and when is it neutral? Ladd thinks that the principle of non-intervention has a moral basis as well as a practical one. It is not merely a matter of what can be done, but a matter of what ought to be done on the basis of respect for the liberty and moral autonomy of others. He continues:

'It should be noted that the notion of P's letting X happen always implies a counterfactual conditional of the type: If P did Y, then X would not happen. Therefore, in order to fully understand what is meant by saying that P let X happen, we must be able to specify what P could have done but did not do (i.e. Y) that would have prevented X from happening... If X is the patient's death, then "ex hypothesi" P cannot prevent X... All P can do is postpone X. So there is something delusive about the notion of letting a person die, in the medical context, because he is going to die anyway.'⁵⁹

Although this cannot be made into a general principle, because this would then rule out any sort of medical intervention, except when the prognosis is very poor, the point is that the contrast is not between letting the patient die and killing the patient, but between letting the patient die and treating the patient and perhaps prolonging his life.

'The real issue concerns the morality of not doing something e.g. not treating or not prolonging life.'⁶⁰ People are held responsible not only for their actions, but also for their omissions, that is the basis of the concept of negligence. Underlying the attitude that omissions do not

count is what Ladd calls an 'interventionist' view of human action, and so not to act means not to intervene, and one can only be held responsible for one's interventions. In the medical context, non-intervention is an aspect of treatment; the medical practitioner decides that patient X will not be fed or resuscitated. In that case, he is responsible for the non-intervention.

It is sometimes assumed that an action means 'causing something to happen' and this seems to imply that one can only act positively, but this is a questionable assumption. It is a strange assumption in medical science in which medical intervention is the name of the game and non-intervention is causal. Thus,

'It is not illogical to attribute someone's death causally to the failure of someone else to feed him, to provide him with drugs or to treat him.'⁶¹

An action can be distinguished from a mere bodily movement in the way that it is always possible to ask for the reason for an action, and 'this logical property of actions will be called "accountability".'⁶² It follows that many forms of non-action and omissions have the logical property of actions. Consequently, when the decision to let a patient die falls into the category of non-treatment, 'it represents an action for which one is accountable as one would be for, say, killing.'⁶³ An act or non-act cannot be changed into something morally neutral simply by using one act-description rather than another. The difference between killing and

letting die could be reduced to a difference in rationale:

'In the rationale for killing, humanitarian considerations are usually paramount, e.g. the pertinent reasons could be such things as the preservation of moral integrity and the alleviation of the suffering of the patient. In the rationale for letting die (non-treating) ...the paramount consideration is the pointlessness of further treatment in view of the hopelessness and the hardship that further treatment would impose on the patient and his family.'⁶⁴

This distinction has an attraction for the medical practitioner because the decision to let the patient die then has the character of a purely medical decision based on medical reasoning and it has the appearance of being removed from more general moral considerations. But this is not the case. The decision is still a moral decision, according to the analysis that Ladd has given. The distinction between killing and letting die should be abandoned, because it suggests that the medical practitioner has the monopoly of decision-making. There should be greater consultation with the family and with the patient, and a realisation that the doctor still has a responsibility for the treatment of his patient, even if his decision involves non-treatment.

The anencephalic child presents a serious problem: the child has no prospect of life which in any way could be regarded as 'human', only the merest physical functioning is possible, and the prognosis is very poor. It

might then be thought that it would be better in such circumstances that the child should die, but not left to die through neglect, after all, the murderer who allowed his victim to suffer before killing him would be regarded as a greater moral villain than the murderer who killed his victim quickly. It might be argued that it would be in the child's best interest, considering the child as a patient, that he should die soon and without suffering. Of course, caution must be exercised here lest one fall into the temptation of equating cortical activity with being a person, as noted in Chapter 4.

The same argument could not be used in the case of the child suffering from Down's Syndrome and duodenal atresia. The child is not born dying, but defective and in need of help, help which can be given. As Diamond eloquently puts it:

'If I have the obligation to care for a child without Down's Syndrome, how can I avoid my obligation to the child with Down's Syndrome? If I have a clear obligation to care for the child with Down's Syndrome, does not that obligation compel me not to omit a duty which I am physically capable of performing?'⁶⁵

The difference in the obligation rests solely on the condition of Down's Syndrome and the presumed lowering of the 'quality of life' and that is thought to reduce the power of the obligation. The difference in the perception of the obligation has been brought about by the paradigm of abortion as a form of treatment for defectiveness. It must be said

that it is a strange medical practice that is reserved for those who are not defective.

Fletcher, who has been an advocate of euthanasia and has written on the subject in various places, sees a suitable parallel between abortion and euthanasia; for if abortion, the ending of 'subhuman' life in the womb, is permitted, there is no reason why 'subhuman life in extremis' should not also be permitted. He continues:

'If we are morally obliged to put an end to a pregnancy when an amniocentesis reveals a terribly defective foetus, we are equally obliged to put an end to a patient's hopeless misery when a brain scan reveals that a patient with cancer has advanced brain metastases.'⁶⁶

Rather than strengthen the case for euthanasia, this points to the weakness of the pro-euthanasiast's case. First, the basis of the moral obligation for abortion is assumed rather than demonstrated, and then applied without further consideration to the dying. According to what has been said above in Chapters 3 and 4, it cannot be assumed that there is a moral obligation to end the life of the defective foetus. Second, Fletcher makes the assumption that the only alternative to suffering is killing. It could set a curious precedent for medical practice if the only cure for pain is death! And there is a third difficulty: his assumed dualism between 'person', as represented by the functioning of the brain, and the 'human being' as the

mere biological functioning of the body. It will be necessary to return to this dualism in the next chapter.

7. Euthanasia and the elderly patient.

The arguments in favour of death rather than of treatment take a different form when they are applied to the elderly and the severely ill than those applied to defective new-born children.

The first argument takes the form of a demand that a person has 'a right to die', which usually means that the patient should be allowed to 'die with dignity'. Although this term, 'dignity', is seldom defined, it often seems to mean that the patient should die without the interference of too much medical technology, and some have written luridly and emotionally of patients having to endure the 'indignity' of tubes in every orifice and connected to machines. (It is interesting to note, however, that this argument is applied to those who are old and not to those who have been seriously injured in accidents.)

The second argument is often couched in terms of 'compassion', and so it is said that it would be 'kinder to let them die', or 'they should be put out of their misery', because their 'quality of life' is so poor.

The third argument is concerned with the amount of pain that the patient must endure, and then a parallel is drawn with the suffering of animals which are 'put down' to end their suffering.

The fourth argument rests upon a dualistic

argument that there is a difference between the 'person' and the 'body'; although the body and its functions may continue, with or without the help of medical technology, to all intents and purposes the 'person' has ceased to exist, and therefore all treatment should be discontinued and the patient 'allowed to die'.

The fifth argument is concerned with economics and the best use that could be made of the scarce resources of medical care. As the population of elderly persons continues to grow, there will be greater scope for the pragmatic utilitarian to argue that the resources should be used for those who are of greater value to society and withdrawn from the less useful members of society.

It is sometimes alleged that a person has the 'right to die', and that the legislation concerning suicide has created such a right, either to terminate one's own life or to have one's life terminated by another. The Suicide Act 1961 removed the criminal sanctions which previously attached to the attempted suicide. In the light of this legislation it might be maintained that a person may be said to have the liberty to take his own life. But this liberty does not entail that the individual has a legal or moral 'right to die'; and the law still prohibits another person from assisting the attempted suicide. The proposition that a person A has a right to die entails that person X has a duty to observe that right. The demand for

a right to die is an ambiguous demand. It seems to include three demands: (a) that the patient can choose to die and is entitled to assistance in the exercise of his choice; (b) that the doctor has the duty to end life; and (c) that the patient should not be subjected to troublesome treatment.

The demand of a right to die often seems to express a strong feeling against the overweening power of the medical professionals making decisions without the apparent consideration of the patient and using treatment that does not appear to be in the best interest of the patient. The clamour for this right may be an expression of a demand for consideration of the autonomy of the patient rather than a legal or moral claim to a right to die.

Sometimes the demand for the right to die is coupled with the phrase 'with dignity'. The coupling is a subterfuge used by the protagonist of euthanasia, for '...by coupling dignity with death the proponent of euthanasia gives death excellence by association which it does not deserve.'⁶⁷ Death is an indignity and no amount of talk of the naturalness of death can alter that, death is a tragedy for those bereaved. No 'existentialist' romanticism about the nobility of death, nor of the alleged freedom of the suicide can change it.

Of course there is little agreement about what 'dignity' entails. Certainly 'nobody wants to die without dignity, but most people do not want to die at all.'⁶⁸ The patient may undergo the experience of losing

control of natural functions, and those emotionally involved with the patient, observing this loss, are actually conscious of a 'loss of dignity'. But what sort of dignity is it that is lost by such experiences? Is this a dignity which is worth preserving? Or is there a more profound meaning to dignity which is untouched by the process of dying? If there is no clear understanding of the concept of dignity, decisions of life and death which are made contingent upon that concept, will be justified on a wide or narrow view of dignity to justify killing.

For the Christian, a man's dignity arises from his creation by God; he is a unique individual and his dignity is compromised when he is reduced to a mere functionary or if he is disregarded as having no inherent value, a value which comes from God and not from his place or function in society. A man's uniqueness need not be lost in death:

'There is also a manifestation of dignity in accepting suffering with courage and patience, in maintaining one's uniqueness against the power of suffering and death.'⁶⁹

There is no need for a patient to die without dignity, in the weak sense of having to endure pain and unnecessary treatment, and the hospice movement has demonstrated convincingly that there can be dignity in the face of death without resort to euthanasia, voluntary or involuntary. This should be the paradigm of compassion and care, rather than the disposal of the dying because they are an embarrass-

ment or inconvenience. To dispose of the dying may be regarded as a convenient and easy solution, but it does not deserve to be called 'compassion' for the dying. To adopt the technically convenient and economically satisfactory solution is the denial of the rights of a person, unless one can so define the dying as 'non-persons', who have forfeited their right to life. A dualist approach might permit this, but the doctrine of creation, drawing attention to the physical just as much as to the spiritual aspects of being, would not allow such a derogation of the physical aspect of man. The dualist interpretation of man and his death allows an instrumental approach to the problem and a treatment of the physical body as a means to some more 'human' ends.

At this point in the appeal to compassion, a parallel is drawn between the 'kind' treatment of animals suffering and dying and the 'cruel' treatment of persons who have to endure their suffering. A suffering animal, it is argued, is compassionately put out of its agony. But the parallel is not a true one. One should ask for the reasons for the 'putting down' of animals, and the reasons might be: (a) the treatment of the dog could be performed, but at considerable expense to the owner, and so in the interests of the owner the dog is 'put down'; (b) the treatment could be lengthy and the cat might still suffer whilst undergoing that treatment, drugs to control the pain could be administered, but the cat would need specialised

post-operative nursing and few people are either equipped or willing to provide this specialised nursing for their cats and so in the interests of the owner the cat is 'put down'; and (c) the injured racehorse could be restored to health, but its racing career would probably be over and its value to its owner would be considerably less and the expense of its unproductive maintenance would be a drain on resources and so for the owner's sake the horse is 'put down'. The parallel to the treatment of human patients, except on a strict utilitarian view is not apt. There is a significant difference which is often overlooked. An animal cannot dispose of its own life, nor can it voluntarily endure its own suffering. The dualist ruins his own argument by denying to the human patient that characteristic difference which he so assiduously maintains to exist between man and animal. Perhaps it would be better to raise the standard of animal care, but it would not be a sign of love or compassion to lower the status of human care to match the present state of animal care. What is needed is not euthanasia, but what Dyck calls 'benemortasia', in which mercy is exercised not to kill but to provide care. After every effort has been made, benemortasia is the attitude that retreats in the face of the inevitability of death, whilst minimising suffering.⁷⁰

The duty to exercise mercy or compassion does not entail a commitment to euthanasia, for this limits the options for compassion, sympathy and care. To admit

the killing option into the medical care of the patient would change the relationship of trust that should obtain between doctor and patient. The permission of euthanasia would not indicate the kindness of society, but that that society had given up on care and understanding. If the minimising of suffering is linked with killing, the implication is that killing is a quicker and more effective means of relieving suffering than the provision of companionship and long-term care.

Contemporary medicine requires an increasingly precise criterion of death. It is no longer sufficient to regard the cessation of breathing as an indicator of death when the medical technology is available to recommence and sustain breathing; the cessation of heart-beat is similarly insufficient as a criterion. The decline of the cerebral cortex is insufficient when the vital functions may continue. The definition now preferred is 'brain-stem death', because if this part of the central nervous system ceases to function so will the rest of the vital functions, since it performs the essential role of a junction-box through which all transmissions to and from the CNS must pass. But, as Hauerwas points out, the attempts to determine the criteria of death are not the same as 'the question whether a life is worth prolonging.'⁷¹ There are three ways of regarding death. First, there is cellular death. Second, there is physiological death when the vital functions have ceased. And third, there is the

view that associates life with intellectual and social and spiritual existence.

Fletcher adopts this third view and maintains 'a doctrine of man that puts the "homo" and "ratio" before the "vita"'.⁷² Thus, it is personal function that matters and not the biological function. Fletcher understands 'human-ness' to be primarily rational and not physical. He uses the dismissive expression, 'vegetable', to refer to the seriously comatose patient, and he maintains that, 'In such cases the patient is actually already departed and only his body is left.'⁷³ This is a dualism in which a distinction is drawn between a 'person' and his 'body' or physical life. This dualism should not go unchallenged. Life is not one process among others. The life of a living entity cannot be distinguished from the reality of the entity. The distinction between 'life' or 'body' and 'person' is a means of treating life as instrumental to some 'higher' and 'personal' value, but dualism is 'a theory which is at war with the experience all persons have of themselves as unified wholes, as self-actualising entities.'⁷⁴ What dies is the organism as a whole, not the various organs of that organism. It is better to regard death as the cessation of the integrated function of the major organs. This view, in Hauerwas' opinion, is a corrective to 'the subtle gnosticism of many of the calls for a new more existential conception of death.'⁷⁵ The human body is not extrinsic to the person,

and existence is not one characteristic amongst others. The doctor's commitment to the prolongation of the physiological functioning is an affirmation of his care for all patients equally, without regard to their relative value. Being a human individual is an all-or-none issue, it does not depend upon his performance or his social contribution.

As in the discussion of abortion, much reference is made to the notion of the 'quality of life'. The demand to terminate a person's life can be made on the basis that a person's life is not worth living or that a person 'would be better off dead'. It must be admitted at once that it is well-nigh impossible to know how another person perceives his own condition, mental or physical, and it would be arrogant to assume that one could pass judgement on the worth of the life of another.

The consequentialist uses the notion of the 'quality of life' as a justification for an attack on 'mere' life. The specification of the quality of life is vague and that suits the subjectivism and paternalism of the consequentialist. The reference to the quality of life is superficial, because the meaning of anyone's life is beyond understanding. It is a temptation to pass judgement on the biological order and to consider some creatures to have no perceived purpose in order to justify the killing of those creatures; even to justify the killing of an intruding wasp is to fall to a temptation based on a limited vision.

Grisez and Boyle argue that references to the quality of life arise from a post-Christian thought-world in which man is at the centre and the source of value, so that what matters is the quality of life and not mere existence, because the good life is one which leads to the enjoyment of human value. If life is no longer wanted, it becomes an end and not a good, and a negative contribution to man's pleasure, and so it could, and should, be disposed of.⁷⁶ Such an anthropocentric view of life is unacceptable within a thought-world formed by the doctrine of creation, that means of seeing the world as other than made by and for man, in which the source of value is not man but God the Creator.

IV. Conclusion.

Theology is a way of construing the world; and its task is to interpret experiences and to form them into a coherent framework by means of developing suitable concepts and models. It is the task of moral theology to establish the moral notions and moral behaviour that are appropriate for those who profess certain beliefs about God. Perhaps, as Hauerwas has observed, no clear distinction between theology and moral theology can be drawn, because theology by its very nature is moral; to answer the question: What ought I to do? rests upon the question: What ought I to be?¹

Religious belief is more than the acceptance of certain propositions; it also involves commitment. In the case of the doctrine of creation the belief aids the discernment of the world as the work of God; and that world both conceals and reveals God. The doctrine of creation is a means of looking at the world theistically. The assertion that the world is created by God is a vision of the world 'sub specie divinitatis'. In Hauerwas' words, 'Claims such as "God is creator" are simply shorthand ways of reminding us that we believe we are participants in a much more elaborate story of which God is the author'.² The doctrine of creation, as expounded in Section I, shows both continuity and change. The language used to express that doctrine changes according to the culture of those professing that doctrine

and according to the information relevant to the understanding of the world which is construed by the doctrine. But at the same time, it is clear that there is continuity in the substance of the doctrine: the world is a mystery which evokes wonder; the world is contingent; the world is rational and stable. The doctrine is an organising image expressing meaning in diversity and goodness in spite of the appearance of hostility, and it is a means of coming to terms with the feeling that I am 'a stranger and afraid/ In a world I never made.'³ The doctrine of creation is an attempt to interpret the world as the work of God, it is not simply a hopeful statement concerning the world's origins.

Our increased knowledge of the development of the created order and of man's development within and from it will no longer permit an anthropocentric interpretation of the world and of man's place within it. The former picture of the world in theology which was implicitly and explicitly anthropocentric must be abandoned. Man is embedded in the world, it is his home, and he is made for it; he shares that home with other animals and with them also shares a great deal of his nature as well as habitat. The doctrine of creation, properly understood, cannot support an anthropocentric view of the world. Man is not its master; he is finite and contingent; he is not the owner nor the maker; he is, in the theological story, responsible to the Creator. Man's pride in his

powers and potentialities is boundless, and an anthropocentric interpretation of creation only serves to feed that pride. An anthropocentric view of the world gives rise to an assumption that the world ought to be a 'happy' place in which all things are ordered for the good of man. But there is no good reason why the world should be so ordered. It is clear that the world is not ordered for the good of the rest of the animal creation; the evolutionary story of both man and animals is one of constant struggle and development in the face of that struggle. It comes as a shock to realise that the divine governance of the world is not necessarily good for anything or anyone. When one describes a natural event as 'evil', one does so because that event produces consequences which one perceives to be contrary to the human good; but that is to 'think as man thinks, and not as God thinks', and to think otherwise is mere presumption. The doctrine of creation maintains the 'otherness' of the world: it is not man's world, nor is it obviously ordered for his benefit. Consequently, man can make no monopolistic claim to the world which he must share with others, both man and beast.

Religious statements are not simple epistemic propositions, they are organising images which have entailments and incompatibles. The doctrine of creation provides a possible basis for moral action, not by means of a simple 'reading off' an 'ought' from an 'is', but

because the doctrine of creation provides the basic story within which we perceive the world and our place in it. It is a starting-point for Christian ethics, for without an understanding of the nature of man, one cannot go on to 'live optimally' within the world.

It is not the task of moral theology to provide a public policy for the difficult problems discussed in Section III. The formation of public policy must take into account a greater diversity of opinion and beliefs than does a Christian moral theology. Moral theology can provide insight into the formation of moral decisions in certain areas and can thereby judge the adequacy or inadequacy of other moral decisions. But moral theology cannot directly influence public policy: first, there is the realisation that contemporary society is pluralist; second, if moral theology is to become public policy, there must be some compromise in order to accommodate to a pluralistic society and that compromise must inevitably involve the loss of something of the particularity of the Christian vision of the world. If in the search for a consensus it is thought that the outcome of that consensus is the most important consideration, one might then ask why one should lumber oneself with the apparatus of religious belief.

To argue that the justification of religious belief rests upon the moral outcome of that belief is to adopt an unjustified approach to religious

belief. Since religion and ethics are not identical, and since it is possible to live morally without a religious belief, there is no good reason to suppose that the justification of religious belief should rest upon the moral conduct that flows from it.

There is, however, a connection between belief and action, but it is not a simple one in which religious belief is merely a mechanism for devising a public policy. The difference provided by religious belief is one of stance or vision, which can have the result that the moral issue is seen more clearly or in a different way. If Christian moral theology is identified with public policy, it will lose its ability to judge the outcome of public policy. All moral action and moral decision-making rest upon certain assumptions or beliefs, moral theology can or should discern when those beliefs are inconsistent or incoherent and then offer a more coherent arrangement of beliefs whose outcome might be more beneficial.

The doctrine of creation might seem to lead to an appeal to natural law, in the sense of that which is basic to all men. In turn, the appeal to natural law seems to offer a secure basis for all moral decision-making. But there is a temptation to intolerance in the presumptions of natural law. The language of natural law and its cognate, natural rights, seems to embody the highest human ideals,

'But it also facilitates the assumption that since anyone who denies such rights is morally obtuse and should be forced to recognise the error of his ways.'⁴

However, the appeal to rights is understandable. The moral consensus according to which moral decisions can be made for public policy no longer exists (that is, if it ever existed at all). There now is no generally agreed system of moral decision-making, there are instead many competing moralities, and more certain ground is sought. There seems to be only one sure foundation, the law, for that is generally accepted even by those who would seek to change it. Rights properly belong to the context of law, but as the moral consensus has declined so rights have been extended to moral issues not directly involved in the law. But the hoped-for sure ground has proved to be less than sure, for rights do not appear to be established on good foundations outside the context of legally conferred rights. The appeal to rights undoubtedly has its attractions; it can be made in order to protect the freedom and interests of some not able to assert their freedom and interests, such as animals and foetuses. But the better treatment of animals or of foetuses can be promoted without the appeal to rights.

Rights properly belong to persons, and usually, it is urged, to those persons possessing rationality. But it is obvious that not all persons possess rationality, or that they possess it in varying degrees,

either actually or potentially. The foetus and the terminally ill might not appear to possess rationality and so it could be claimed that they do not possess rights; and so there has been discussion concerning the nature of the person who might possess rights. The discussion has been inconclusive, and there is no need to rehearse those discussions here; it is sufficient to note that being a human being, that is to say, a human animal is a sufficient condition of being a person. If a person is defined as 'a rational and self-conscious being', there might be occasions when a specific human being is not in possession of the defining characteristics. An individual being may display no signs of rationality or self-consciousness and yet he is a person, because he is a human being who belongs to a species characterised by rationality and self-consciousness.

On this basis the foetus and the terminally ill are persons, and the rights which normally pertain to persons also pertain to those being in these categories. It is strange that it can be argued that rights should be ascribed to animals and things and yet be denied (by Singer, for example) to those beings which clearly belong to a rational and self-conscious kind.

It is one thing to have a rationally sound moral argument, it is another to follow through that argument into action. However well-formed the argument may be, it does not necessarily lead to good action. It

is possible to have a rationally developed argument and then act immorally. One might say that the person who acted immorally, even though he could argue effectively against that action, had not really attended to the argument; but something more than a sound argument is needed. There is a need to consider the precursor of action and to connect that motive or feeling with the argument. A person is more than a rational being, he is also the possessor of powerful feelings that need to be controlled and directed (as Jesus was well aware in the Sermon on the Mount).

The consideration of moral decision-making in Section II drew attention to this aspect of ethics. It is not only a case of propositions having entailments, it is also a matter of one's perception affecting one's actions.

Attempts to argue moral questions only on the basis of reason or logic, especially in connection with issues of bio-medical ethics, have been misguided and unsuccessful. The reason for this is that our actions are not based solely upon reason or logic; the mistake has been to leave out of consideration the nature of decision-making. One component of that decision-making is feeling. Abortion and euthanasia do not only constitute a problem for reason, they come with emotional reactions which must be taken seriously. To argue rationally for

abortion whilst at the same time feeling that there is something abhorrent or unacceptable or even unaesthetic about it, is to lead to a loss of coherence.

From the consideration of the inter-relation between the doctrine of creation and moral action in Section II some important features emerged. One of the most basic questions that one must face is: Who am I? and the answer to the question is in the form of self-commitment, which Evans considers to be one of the moral virtues. A moral virtue is a particular stance which is adopted and from which other moral problems are considered. If we have been correct in regarding the doctrine of creation as an interpretative schema, in which the world and man's place within it are construed, it is then possible to regard the doctrine of creation as a basis for self-commitment. The doctrine involves an understanding that life is a gift, that man is finite, and that man is accountable for his actions.

Toulmin drew attention to the feelings that are bound up with moral judgements and to the need that the rational and emotional aspects of decision-making are to be kept in balance. He suggested that the question: What should I do? is often a 'limiting question', in which one's emotions and world-view are involved, because a 'limiting question' is related to a world-view which accepts the way the world is. A religious belief may provide a world-view, and the doctrine of creation is, according

to the presentation set out in Section I, a consistent world-view which attempts to provide a way of seeing the world theistically and of accepting the way the world is.

To live a moral life involves how one sees the world. Theology is concerned with an interpretative schema in which the world is interpreted theistically in the doctrine of creation, and theology cannot avoid being concerned with the moral life. The doctrine of creation emphasises man's radical dependence and contingency and that life is a gift, consequently theology must be concerned with the issues of life and death and with the treatment of persons between those two unknowns. Any Christian moral stance derived from or related to the doctrine of creation must recognise: (a) that persons are autonomous and worthy of respect; and (b) that autonomous persons are not the property of others to be used according to another's whim.

These two perceptions influence our dealings and actions, and in particular those persons who are the objects of the actions of abortion and euthanasia. To treat persons in any other way than as autonomous persons worthy of respect is to lose coherence between belief and action. When there is dis-continuity between belief and action there are serious consequences. When the primary concern of medical care is care for others irrespective of their social status, the practice of medicine is compromised when some persons are regarded as

less than persons because they are incurably or terminally ill, or because they are unprotected or defective. The dis-continuity becomes clear and of serious moment, not only for the medical practitioner's self-image, but also for the image of the practitioner amongst those whose trust and confidence he needs. There are serious consequences for the community, for if some persons can be deemed to be of less consequence than others on the basis of their illness, deformity, or being 'unwanted', there is little to prevent others at the same time or at some later time being deemed to be unworthy of respect and no longer 'wanted'. The result would not be what was intended by the liberal reformer of 'restrictive' legislation, but it is an example of liberal good intentions being used for illiberal ends. The third consequence is for Christian faith and practice. Tolerance of abortion and euthanasia by Christians suggests a lack of coherence in their belief in the creatorship of God, the goodness of creation, and the true worth of all persons because they are loved by God, whatever the human judgement to the contrary. To regard some persons as less than persons on the basis of weakness, illness, defectiveness, and simply being 'unwanted' is contrary to the professed belief in God as Creator.

Actions are more than unrelated gestures, they are expressive of our character, and character is made through and by our actions which we choose to perform. According to Hauerwas, 'our concern to protect and enhance

life is a sign of our confidence that in fact we live in a new age in which it is possible to see the other as God's creation. We do not value life as an end in itself...rather all life is value....because God has valued them.'⁵ The acceptance of abortion and euthanasia as solutions to 'problems' is an indicator of the sort of society in which we live, and more importantly, the sort of people we are. 'The necessity of abortion too often is the necessity generated by our unwillingness to change our lives to any significant degree so that another alternative might be contemplated.'⁶ The alleged necessity of abortion is not a medical or moral necessity, but one which arises from our character and suggests much about the quality of sexual relationships in which sexual activity is instrumental, in which an act and its consequences are separated.⁷ It seems to be the case that abortion has become merely another method of contraception.

Our actions are the expression of our motives and presuppositions. If one recognises that the foetus and the terminally ill are those who stand in need of protection and care, the preparedness to dispose of such persons suggests that we no longer care for others, especially those most in need of care. Put like this, abortion and euthanasia run counter to the Christian's presuppositions expressed in the Christian story. The doctrine of creation, the story of God's dealings with man, has a high view of life and persons, demanding respect for

others, and it cannot but pass judgement on those actions which compromise that respect.

The practice of medicine rests upon the recognition that the patient is a person whose interests must be served, and on the recognition of the patient as one who stand in need of care and attention which the medical practitioner is capable of providing. When care which could be given is not given, the medical practitioner can rightly be regarded as culpable of neglect. The purpose of medical care is, insofar as is possible, to provide for the needs and interests of the patient. There seems to be a dis-location in this purpose when medicine is not used in the interests of the patient, but in the interest of another, or of the economic interests of the larger community. Concern for the individual person cannot be subsumed into the concern for the greatest good of the greatest number.

It will be admitted that the suggested approach based upon the doctrine of creation does not yield ready-made and easy answers to pressing problems. It is probably too much to expect that moral theology will supply those sort of answers. But what the doctrine of creation does is to appeal to humility in the face of mystery and to suggest a denial of the delusion of a complete mastery through technological skills, and a realisation that, in spite of awesome skills, man is not

the master of creation, but a part of it. There should then be an erring on the side of life, and a humble retreat in the face of inevitable death.

'In a world which grows more and more impersonal, where men are treated more and more ruthlessly as hands and cogs and regimented with less and less regard for their individual personalities, it is Christianity which continues to assert that we must treat all men not merely as human beings but as our brothers. In a world which is becoming more and more artificial and remote from natural things, it is Christianity which constantly recalls us to those natural things, to our roots in the universe....It is Christianity which keeps alive in us the faculty of wonder and tries to make us..contemplatives. It is Christianity which teaches us to be still and look and listen to the "essences of things"; which teaches men and women to have wonder for each other;...it is Christianity which keeps us from becoming blind and desiccated materialists and utilitarians, by reminding us all the time that we live in a sphere whose horizons are infinite and whose atmosphere is mystery.'⁸

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