



SUSTAINED BY HOPE

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Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the **hope** you have in you (1 Pet 3:15, TEV).

... **Hope** does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (Rom 5:5, NRSV).

Optimistic ecologists are a critically endangered species – as hard to find as flying pigs. Those you do find are often infected with a particular virus – an admirable, naïve confidence in humanity's ability to get us out of the mess we are in. But my topic is neither optimism nor hubris, but hope. Hope of a "better world," hope not only that Maui's dolphin and the NZ Fairy Tern and the Kaka Beak will survive and flourish, but hope too that the earth can recover, or rather be redeemed, from the devastation we have wreaked on it in our thoughtlessness and greed, hope that our work towards this end is not wasted, hope that sustains. Where do we look for such hope?¹

LOOKING FOR HOPE IN THE WORLD

Thinking about this topic, I scanned the news from Rio +20 for signs of hope.² I was anxious to avoid the attitude that we Christians often adopt, which assumes, in the face of the evidence, that only ideas proposed by Christians, or explicitly developed from a Christian theology, will provide the real solutions to the problems of the world. Nevertheless, the output from Rio was disappointing to someone looking for genuine signs of hope.

Then I came across a recent book by Tim Flannery, author of *The Future-eaters*.³ In *Here on Earth*⁴ Flannery traces two distinct though interacting lines of understanding the natural world over the past two centuries. One line, from Charles Darwin to Richard Dawkins emphasises the "survival of the fittest," adaptation through unbridled competition

1 The title of this essay and the theology undergirding it owe much to the inspiration of N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

2 The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in 2012, twenty years after the first such conference also in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. See online: www.uncsd2012.org. Accessed 19 March 2012.

3 Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australasian Lands and People* (New York: Grove, 1994).

4 Tim Flannery, *Here on Earth: A New Beginning* (London: Allen Lane, 2010).

for resources.⁵ This is the familiar "nature red in tooth and claw" understanding of evolution. But the other line he traces is from Alfred Wallace to James Lovelock. Alfred Wallace discovered the principle of evolution almost at the same time as Darwin, but instead of devoting himself to the lives and loves of earthworms, his thinking become more holistic, taking in the place of humanity in the entire natural world. At age eighty he published *Man's Place in the Universe*.⁶ James Lovelock is the founder of the Gaia hypothesis, the idea that the Earth can be viewed as a single complex organism, a self-regulating and self-correcting hyper-complex system.⁷ Despite being hijacked by New Age enthusiasts, the proposal is a scientific one. This line of thought, from Wallace to Lovelock, stresses the importance of cooperation and integration in natural systems. This has operated throughout Earth's history, from the time life forged its own niche by its influence on the atmosphere, oceans and even the crust. It is

evident in the cooperative activities of groups of individuals within a species (elephants and whales are just two examples) and in inter-species cooperation and mutual reliance. We ourselves could not live without our gut bacteria, nor they without us. And at

the far end of the scale are the vast complex super-organisms of leaf-cutter ant colonies, bee-hives and contemporary human society. Cooperation, Flannery argues, is not just another manifestation of the selfish gene at work, but a more fundamental and creative property of life on Earth. Flannery is not suggesting that the ruthless competitiveness and self-centredness of "survival of the fittest" is not a real and powerful force. Just that the opposite pole tends to be neglected. And it is here that he locates his hope for our future:

Beckoning us towards destruction are our numbers, our dismantling of Earth's life-support system and especially our inability to unite in action to secure our common

5 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (John Murray: London, 1859). Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: OUP, 1976).

6 Alfred Wallace, *Man's Place in the Universe* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1904). Wallace had published a paper entitled "On the Law Which Has Regulated the Introduction of New Species" in 1855, but it was in his 1858 paper "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely From the Original Type" – sent to Darwin, and read along with two papers from Darwin at the Linnean Society – that he set out his own theory.

7 James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: OUP, 1979).

wealth. Yet we should take solace from the fact that, from the very beginning, we have loved one another and lived in company, thereby, through giving up much, forging the greatest power on Earth. Those simple traits have allowed the weakest of us collectively to triumph, to establish agriculture, business and democracy, in the face of opposition sometimes so formidable as to make success look impossible.⁸

It was while I was still reading Flannery's book that I heard Dame Anne Salmond deliver the inaugural Sir Paul Reeves Memorial lecture. In "Beyond the Binary: Shifting New Zealand's Mindset,"⁹ she echoed on a sociological level many of the themes that Flannery had expounded on a biological one. Starting a little earlier, with the Enlightenment, she shows how two contrasting philosophies, the "Order of Things" and the "Order of Relations" have both competed to influence the shape of human society. The "Order of Things," derived from the older "Great Chain of Being," is hierarchical and became focussed in a series of binary oppositions: man versus nature, rich versus poor, man versus woman, civilized versus savage. Social Darwinism fed this stream and though we may shake off some of its more obviously distasteful products (like eugenics) it is, nevertheless, this stream which flows through our market-driven economic system, in which human relations are understood as a competition for scarce resources. However, there is another altogether more hopeful line of thought, also stemming from the enlightenment, traceable through the work of Tom Paine, William Blake, Erasmus Darwin and Benjamin Franklin, to name but a few. This view of the world is based on relationships, which, Dame Anne argues, we should pay much more attention to in forging our future. We live within networks of relationships, modelled on the rhizome, and exemplified by the World Wide Web. Collaboration

THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS WE CARE MOST DEEPLY ABOUT... WHEN IT COMES TO CARING FOR THE EARTH, CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER, EMERGENCY RESPONSE, PUBLIC SAFETY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY, HAPPINESS, HEALTH AND WELFARE - THOSE ARE ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY

8 Flannery, *Here on Earth*, 272–73. For a more detailed critical review of Flannery's book see Byron Smith, "Review of *Here on Earth: An Argument for Hope*." Online: http://publicchristianity.org/library/review-here-on-earth#.UQ8eqh32_cA. Accessed 4 Feb 2013.

9 Delivered in Holy Trinity Cathedral, Auckland, 17 August 2012. For a transcript see online: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10827658. For a video of the speech see Online: <http://vimeo.com/49300122>. Both accessed 4 Feb 2013.

and complementarity are the way of the future she says, rather than competition.

Genuine differences do exist... but so do networks of interlocking relations, shared values and mutual dependency. Rather than excluding the middle ground, the challenge is to get the networks of relations across it working in ways that are mutually positive and creative, not hostile and destructive.¹⁰

Cooperation is quite a mundane word suggesting committees and compromises. But it is a foundation for hope that is based on reality. And notice two things about this undervalued word.

First, derived from Latin roots, it means "working together." Translate those roots into Greek and you get another word: synergy. Now this is altogether more popular and attractive and vibrant. It suggests to us that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that by working together, cooperating, we can efficiently and effectively produce change.

Secondly, note that "Cooperation" is one of the

five core values of A Rocha,¹¹ and those of us involved with A Rocha live out this value by working with other organisations, faith based or not, and indeed by working with the natural world of New Zealand itself.

And yet cooperation remains in itself an abstract concept. Already in both Flannery and Salmond we see a desire for something

more than the abstract. Cooperation is given shape by "Community." Not surprisingly, this is another of A Rocha's core values.

Our first understanding of the word "community" rightly relates to human communities. Community is the living flesh of cooperation, the context where faith, hope and love are nurtured. "From the very beginning we have loved one another and lived in company."¹² Flannery's hope and Salmond's hope are based not just on an abstract concept but on a reality which has proved itself throughout human history.

Recently I heard on National Radio, part of a programme discussing community development. One of the presenters interviewed Jim Diers, author of "Neighbour Power: Building Community the

10 Salmond, "Beyond the Binary."

11 See online: <http://www.arocha.org/int-en/who/values.html>. Accessed 4 Feb 2013.

12 See footnote 8 (above).

Seattle Way.”¹³ Diers moved from being an activist opposing local government to working within the local government structure in Seattle, developing neighbourhoods and communities. Over four thousand projects have seen a whole revival of local and integrated action to create better communities, including among other things, planting parks and roadside trees and community gardens. Diers said

We have come to realize that there’s no substitute for community when it comes to things we care most deeply about. There’s a role for government, for the voluntary sector, but when it comes to caring for the earth, caring for one another, emergency response, public safety, social justice, democracy, happiness, health and welfare – those are all the responsibility of community.

But we need to take this idea of community to another level, one which James Lovelock has highlighted. Human beings are a part of a wider family which includes the animals, the plants, and, ultimately, inanimate nature as well. Here is both danger and possibility. Our track record over the past two or to three centuries has been that we have sought to distinguish ourselves from all else, place ourselves above all else, and in doing so have torn the threads of the web asunder. But the possibility is still there as well, that as a member of the Earth community, our human communities can work with the whole for the benefit of the whole.

Hope, real hope, can find basis in cooperation and community. But these are what Richard Bauckham calls “proximate hopes.”¹⁴ They are very real, and valid and creative. They foster a huge amount of wonderful work in our world. But they remain limited and tentative and fragile. Flannery is, at the end of his book, almost *wistfully* hopeful that humanity’s genius for cooperation will win out over its genius for competition and destruction. Is there any way that we can rise above this to something more secure, a hope that does not disappoint? Is hope ever anything more than a typically post-modern set of stories, local in space and time?

¹³ Online: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/sunday/audio/2529986/ideas-for-2-september-2012.asx>. Accessed 4 Feb 2013.

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, “Ecological Hope in Crisis,” John Ray Initiative Briefing Paper No 23, August 2012. Online: <http://www.jri.org.uk/publications/jri-briefing-paper-no-23-ecological-hope-in-crisis-by-prof-richard-bauckham/>. Accessed 4 March 2013.

LOOKING FOR HOPE IN THE WORD

As Christian (another A Rocha value), we understand that our stories are part of one big story stretching from Creation to New Creation. It is within the context of this master narrative that we must look for “ultimate hope.”

Richard Hays, in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, identifies three “focal images” within the text of the New Testament which together provide a framework for examining the New Testament’s moral and ethical imperatives and for discovering from such an ancient text, principles for how we ought to live today. These are Community, Cross and New Creation.¹⁵ I suggest that these same categories help us understand more of a biblical hope for the earth – but we need to extend this triad backwards to include the Old Testament and make a chain of four links. Creation – Community – Cross – New Creation provides the structure of biblical hope.

The two anchor points, of this chain, Creation and New Creation, lie outside our experience – not really outside of history but outside of the timeline of continuous and inherited experience of our species. Our lack of direct experience, lack of mental models even, for these two dimensions, is one reason why Christians disagree so much about them.

The other two categories are firmly within “normal” human history. It is immediately clear that there is an integration point between the “proximate” hopes I have been talking about, and this grand and hopeful biblical narrative. It is the category of “community.” This is a human, or perhaps creaturely, dimension we share with all of creation, and particularly with people of goodwill and common cause. This is where the insights of Flannery and Salmond and Diers generate real hope. I do not want in any way to belittle this ground of hope, because it is an integral part of the big story. But there is a difference. The belief that at the centre of history stands the Cross of Christ is the distinctive factor which makes this a Christian story and casts light on all the other categories.

¹⁵ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 193–200.

CREATION

This is the foundational category. We have hope for the future of our earth because,

- ¹ The earth is the *Lord's* and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;
- ² for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers (Ps 24:1, NRSV).

God's delight in creation is seen in God's declaring each successive group as "good" and the whole together as "very good" (Genesis 1).

- ³ O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;
- ⁴ who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;
- ⁵ who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;
- ⁶ who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever (Ps 136:3–6, NRSV).

Because the Earth belongs to God, by virtue of creation, we may have confidence and hope that it is the object of God's ongoing care.¹⁶

COMMUNITY

The Bible narrates God's interactions with *humanity*, calling out a *people* to live in fellowship with Godself, first from the family of Abraham and then from all the families of the world. We look in vain for the word "cooperation" in English translations. "Community" only occurs as a gender-inclusive way of rendering "brotherhood." But practically everything about life in ancient Israel or life in the church is about life in community – a point often missed by post-enlightenment Western individualists. In both the Old and New Testaments, this community is a fellowship defined by Covenant – a relationship not only between people but also with God. In the New Testament this dimension is evident throughout the narratives and in the language used of the church as a body. There may be no abstract "cooperation" but everywhere we find fellowship, *koinōnia*, describing the commonality of believers together with each other and with Christ. And we have plenty of examples of "co-operators" in their Greek dress: *synergoi*, fellow workers. In

¹⁶ Much more could be said about this, and indeed has been said. The brevity of this section is not because of any lack of importance, but because it is more often treated in discussions of Christian responsibility for the earth. See, for example, the extensive references to Genesis 1–2, creation Psalms, and Job, throughout Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010).

one remarkable passage Paul speaks of his *synergy* with Apollos *and with GOD*, using imagery from the natural world which is underwritten by God (1 Cor 3:6–9).

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth (v. 6)... For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building (v. 9).

Literally, "We are God's *synergoi*," God's fellow workers, a translation supported by the image of the complementary parts played by Paul, Apollos and God in the growth of the plants.

And there is another level of community in Scripture too. One central theme of Richard Bauckham's book *The Bible and Ecology* is the "Community of Earth." Bauckham clearly demonstrates that biblically we are part of a community which includes both the animate and inanimate natural world. The Bible from Genesis 1 onwards recognises a fundamental distinction

between God and the world, but God is from beginning to end deeply involved with and committed to the world. In Bauckham's reading of the biblical text, the fundamental polarity of God-World becomes not a triangle (God-Humanity-

Creation) but a quadrilateral (God-Humanity-Animate creation-Inanimate creation). We might argue about the configuration, and, in fact, we know the relationships in the natural world are more like a complex web or a rhizome. But the fundamental point is that there are lines of relationship between every part. God relates to the rest of creation directly and vice versa. We are part of an Earth Community by creation, in our worship, and in our ultimate destiny (and in the path toward that destiny). Bauckham demonstrates within a biblical worldview what Lovelock has argued for in a world without God.

This is nicely illustrated in the book of Revelation which, in common with some other apocalyptic texts (including Daniel), is full of animal imagery. Frequently appearing in this bizarre drama are "four living creatures" – one like a lion, one like an ox, one with a face like a human and one like a flying eagle (Rev 4:6–8 etc). I decline to speculate what these might "be" in an ontological sense, but within the fabric of the vision they are throne attendants and their function is the perpetual worship of God and the Lamb. Humanity is joined with wild and domestic animals and birds in acknowledging the

worth of the one on the throne.¹⁷ Further, once the Lamb has been introduced, John hears “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!” (Rev 5:13, NRSV; see also Phil 2:10–11).

Our hope for the future weal of the Earth is grounded in the fact that we are part of an intricate network of matter, animate and inanimate, to which the Creator has committed himself, and whose purpose is to bring worship and praise to him.

CROSS

And yet, we have almost got ahead of ourselves. Another of Revelation’s animal images is a “Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered” (Rev 5:6).¹⁸

Colossians 1:19–20 declares: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (NRSV).

The author does not say why “all things” might need reconciling to God, why the relationship is not as it should be. But the fact that something is wrong with the created order is assumed (see the equally tantalising hints in Rom 8:20), and one of the manifestations of this problem is known to us today as the “ecological crisis.” This is itself intimately connected with the disruption of the God-human relationship which we call “sin.” What is clear here is that the death of Jesus on the cross is the point at which God has put *all* things to right – all of the relationships in Bauckham’s quadrilateral which are in crisis. There can be no doubt here that the “all things” which are reconciled by the cross are just as inclusive as the “all things” which were created in Christ and for Christ.

God’s love for the cosmos (John 3:16), which led him to send his only Son, was and is a love for the whole fabric of creation. This is supported by the whole tenor of Scripture. Take Psalm 136,

¹⁷ Lest anyone argue that this is mere imagery, it is important to note that nothing is “merely” anything in the book of Revelation. Reality and vision are intertwined both structurally and linguistically.

¹⁸ Notice that the Saviour of the world is portrayed as a Lion and a Root and a Lamb!

¹ O give thanks to the *Lord*, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever...

⁵ who by understanding made the heavens...

⁶ who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever (NRSV).

The cross is the central point of that larger story: Incarnation – Cross – Resurrection. The God, who the Bible has declared to be separate from creation (holy) here, for the sake of his creation, becomes part of it. “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2). That is, he has become, like us and like even the inanimate world, composed of star-dust. “Christ suffered in the flesh” (1 Pet 4:1), so he felt the full effects of and suffered from precisely what is wrong with the world. And, “in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died” (1 Cor 15:20). Here is the key to our hope in the future.

We have hope for the future of our world, the future of matter, because Christ has come in the flesh, has died as a human being, and has been raised bodily from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. And that brings us neatly to our final category.

WE HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD, THE FUTURE OF MATTER, BECAUSE CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH, HAS DIED AS A HUMAN BEING, AND HAS BEEN RAISED BODILY FROM THE DEAD, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED.

NEW CREATION

First Corinthians 15 affirms that Jesus’ resurrection is both the guarantee and the model for our own. But by drawing both animate and inanimate nature into the discussion it hints that the resurrection is also the pattern for the whole created world. The nature language (grain and food, the fleshly nature of animals and humans, the various glories of sun, moon and stars) might at first be seen just as examples. But the chapter sweeps on to say (v. 42) “So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.” We together with all creation are “perishable.” But the resurrection of Jesus has begun a process in which all will be “raised imperishable.”¹⁹

And the greatest density of use of the word “hope” in the entire NT is in Rom 8:20–25. Here our hope is clearly for the future of the whole of creation. It will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain glorious freedom. What this will involve I will not begin to speculate. But of course Paul was not the first to think about it. Already in the book of Isaiah

¹⁹ Cf. Colossians 1 where Christ, the firstborn of creation, is also “the firstborn from the dead so that in/among all things he might be preeminent.”

the writer has anticipated the coming of a new heavens and new earth.²⁰

And so, finally, we come back to Revelation. It is interesting that when news media want to describe the devastating natural or ecological disasters the world has witnessed in recent years, they will describe it as a disaster of “biblical proportions” or an “apocalyptic scene.” And indeed, though we haven’t got time to investigate it here, there is much in the disasters described in the book of Revelation which sounds remarkably like the devastations that we human beings have worked in the world. But it is to Revelation’s final scenes that I want to turn for it is here that we find the description of the new heavens and new earth, a theme first heard in Isaiah 65–66.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:1–4, NRSV).

“The first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.” To understand this passage we must locate it in its literary context. It is the first of *two* visions of the New Jerusalem (21:1–8; 21:9–22:9). And it is the last in a series of visions sandwiched between two parallel celestial journeys in which John is shown the fate of Babylon (17:1–19:10) and the arrival of the New Jerusalem (21:9–22:9). So although we naturally connect 21:1–8 with what follows, it relates just as closely to the *previous* scene – 20:11–15, the Great White Throne, and it is there we must look for clues.

“The earth and the heaven fled from his presence” (v. 11). Heaven and earth, like actors in a play, run off stage at the coming of the judge on the throne. In this drama the sea takes the role it has often had in the history of Israel – a place of chaos and danger and death. And while its partners

in crime – Death and Hades – are thrown into the lake of fire, nothing further is said of the sea.

Coming back to our passage we notice several things:²¹

1. Drawing on Isaiah’s vision of a new heavens and a new earth, John too portrays the final destiny of the universe as being made new by God’s coming.
2. The first creation has simply, as the Greek says, “gone away” – not ceased to exist. Of course it went away – that is what the last scene portrayed – heaven and earth running off stage. Now here they come again – but there is something very different about them. They have changed costume offstage. They are new.
3. The disappearance of the sea is not a prediction of an earth without its marine environment, but as the end of the realm of death and chaos.
4. Heaven and earth, which were always made for each other, star-crossed lovers you might say, are at last united. The dwelling place of God is with human beings – on the renewed earth.
5. All this is the result of God’s renewal project rather than a completely new start.

It is renewal in the sense which we can perhaps understand in terms of what is currently happening to Christchurch.²² Something earth-shattering has happened and in what we see now there is both continuity and discontinuity with the past. Some of the old things are gone, some new things appear, and some of the old things are improved or restored or made just as if they are new again. And, of course, continuity and discontinuity is exactly what happened with the body of Jesus through the resurrection.

This is a very far cry from a cosmic disaster which obliterates the physical universe and replaces it with something different and insubstantial. The new heaven and earth are on the other side of a direct intervention of God. But the Earth is renewed not annihilated – as with the body of Jesus there is both continuity and discontinuity. And we go on to read of the city and the garden – redeemed culture, redeemed earth (including trees and animals!)²³ – the curse is no more.

21 For a more detailed treatment of this and similar passages see Stephen Pattemore, “How Green Is Your Bible? Ecology and the End of the World in Translation,” *The Bible Translator* 58 (2007): 75–85.

22 I do recognise the inherent limits within analogies.

23 Apart from the prominent Lamb, who we may remember is also a Lion, the strong allusion to Isaiah 65 carries with it the implication that the renewed earth includes a complete and renewed biosphere.

20 Note especially Isa 11:1–9; 65:17–25.

We have hope because “in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home” (2 Pet 3:13).

CONCLUSION

It is this unashamedly “grand” narrative which gives substance to our more immediate hopes. As Bauckham puts it, “ultimate hope funds proximate hope.”²⁴ All that is achieved through cooperation and community is not “chasing after the wind,” because this hope underwrites our actions.

Willis Jenkins, in *Ecologies of Grace*, analyses the motives for ecological action of both Christian and secular agencies along three different lines.²⁵ Some work in conservation because of the intrinsic worth of the natural world, some because they sense a need to restore what we humans have wrecked, and some because of their membership in the Earth community.

Biblical hope, sustaining hope, means that we respond to each of these motivations.

Our hope is based on the fact that all of nature is God’s creation. And so we work to conserve and restore because of the intrinsic worth that each part has.

Our hope is based on the “community of all creation” and the Creator’s becoming a part of it. And so we work to conserve and restore because we are participating members of this community.

Our hope is based on the cross of Christ and his reconciling work there. And so we work to conserve and restore, called to participate in this ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18).

Our hope is based on the coming new heavens and new earth. And so we work to conserve and restore “knowing that in the Lord our labour is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58).

Finally, it is important to recall where and how we discovered ground for such ultimate hope. It is in the Bible. But it is not a matter of looking for “green texts” here or there, or interpreting and re-interpreting individual passages to find support for ecological hope and action.²⁶ Rather, it is in the integrating master-narrative of the Bible, the story of God and the world. This is a story which affirms the

more particular and immediate sources of hope with which we began, and gives them a place in the story of God’s love for the world from eternity to eternity.

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²⁴ Bauckham, “Ecological Hope in Crisis.”

²⁵ Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

²⁶ I do not mean in any way to downplay the important and necessary effort that goes into understanding and interpreting particular passages of Scripture in the light of the ecological crisis in which we live. For a particularly good example of this see David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010). It is rather that such work has point because of the larger story discernable in the whole of Scripture.