In interfaith dialogue one feels an obligation somehow to speak for one's whole faith community. Yet we all know this is impossible. I cannot speak for Orthodox and Catholic Christians, or even for Protestants in general.

I feel an additional problem with respect to my assignment. I have strong convictions on this topic, and I recognise that these are not shared by the majority of Christians. I think I must say something about this difference and give some justification for claiming my own views as a Christian. Fortunately, I am asked to present 'a Christian view'.

In a formal way, I suggest that a Christian view is one that is rooted in the whole Bible as that is read in light of the story of Jesus and the apostolic witness to him found in what we Christians call the 'New Testament'. The great majority of us understand our beliefs to be of this character. Debates as to what Christians should believe normally refer to this source for their most basic authority, although in some traditions later decisions by church leaders have equal, or nearly equal, authority.

Inevitably, just as all Christians see the Jewish scriptures through the New Testament, so also Christians of the several Christian traditions see the New Testament through later developments in their separate histories. Protestants, for example, read Paul through the eyes of Luther and Calvin. Whether, and to what extent, this is distorting is still debated. If further developments lead Protestants to conclude that Paul's meaning is in opposition to the interpretation of Luther and Calvin, in faithfulness to Luther and Calvin we will be inclined to turn away from them to Paul as our point of reference. For us the apostolic witness remains primary, however deeply we are informed by our subsequent history. But we know that every reading of that witness, however scholarly, will always be shaped by the tradition of thought in which it stands. We cannot return to the position of the apostles.
I THE EARTH AND HUMANITY AS CREATION

This account of what it means for a position to be Christian is important with respect to the topic at hand. There can be no doubt that for many generations, the finest Protestant theology has seen the scriptures as radically anthropocentric. Human history and individual human existence have been viewed as the loci of God’s concern and action. Scholars and theologians have known that the Bible also speaks of the creation of the natural world, but they have understood this to be a secondary interest, an unnecessary extension of thinking from the centre, which is the historical covenant of the people of Israel with God. God’s dealing with the world is for the sake of the redemption of human beings. From their point of view references to the non-human world as praising God or participating in redemption reflect the continuing influence of Baal cults. What is distinctive of Israel is its orientation to history.

This remains the predominant position in Protestant circles. It comes to expression in preaching, in the topics discussed by Christian ethicists, and in the actions of ecumenical gatherings, as well as in scholarly exegesis and professional theology.

In historical terms, this view is rather recent. In the eighteenth century the orderliness of the non-human creation provided arguments for the existence and goodness of God. In more recent times as well there have been dissident voices who believed that the natural world bore evidence of divine care, and that human beings should not suppose themselves to be so separated from the remainder of the creation. Joseph Sittler attracted some attention to this concern in an important address to the New Delhi assembly of the World Council of Churches. In the English-speaking world there was an effort to understand God’s role in the evolutionary process culminating in human beings. In the form given this vision by Teilhard de Chardin it found resonance in many people. But until widespread attention was called to the global crisis resulting from Western industrialisation of the planet, the basic anthropocentric habit of mind was not seriously challenged. Since then there has been a steady flow of books and articles calling for revision in the established view. These often seem temporarily and locally successful in altering perceptions. But as soon as the pressure to rethink these questions is relaxed, the dominant attitudes reassert themselves.

An example can be found in the World Council of Churches. The Church and Society unit led international Christian reflection