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## *Is the World Bad or Good?*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

Is the world inherently good, or is the world inherently bad? The way Christians answer that question often leads to their conclusions in ethical issues.

On the one hand, there are Christians who see the "world" as inherently bad. It is fallen, after all. They point to scripture. Jesus says that "in the world, you will have tribulation." He says that "the world cannot know me, the world hates me." To be sure, he probably speaks of the world social and cultural order, but the word is the same as that used for the natural world: "cosmos." Thus, there is a type of faithful Christian who is legitimately suspicious of finding God in the social or physical world. William Wordsworth, the poet, writes:

"The world is too much with us, late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers,  
Little we see in nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away! ..."

We have Christians, many of whom you and I know quite well, who deeply distrust the world. No matter how we define "world," they think it is inherently bad, evil, corrupted, untrustworthy.

However, another poet speaks of the "world" in another way. Gerard Manley Hopkins claims that

"The world is charged with the grandeur of God!  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil  
It gathers to a greatness,."

This second view enjoys the first chapters of Genesis, claiming that, day by day, the world is good. Even after the Fall, there is something good in the world. God is still present in the world, and God uses the world to show us grace and glory.

I am this second sort of Christian. I know there is evil in the world, but I see the world-first-as inherently good. God has created a great diversity of humanity, and every one of us can be a vessel of God's grace. Each creation of God has a gift to offer us!

The gospel this past Sunday used a verse which has been quoted all over the world: John 3.16. "For God so loved the world," Stop right there. Perhaps it does not really matter whether we view the world as inherently bad or inherently good. This beautiful verse says that God loves the world, whether it is bad or good. God probably does not even care whether we view the world as bad or good. God loves the world.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish  
but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3.16-17).

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