III.

NATURE

Most modern theology draws a sharp contrast between the God of nature and the God of history and identifies the Christian God mainly with the latter. However, the pagans of northern Minnesota tend to be unreconstructed nature worshipers. They liked my sermons about elm trees and dandelions, so I occasionally make a pulpit bow to the fertility cults.

I rarely use an old sermon without re-doing it completely, but in "The God of Nature" I slipped over on the congregation a 1959 production with only a few ex tempore modifications. On July 13 who would know the difference? Within half an hour of delivering this sermon I was off on my vacation. Forty-eight hours later I was thirteen hundred miles away, practicing what I preached.

On the other hand, "My Debt to Asclepius" was designed especially for the occasion of the visit by the Northland College Choir. I wanted to relate the environmental studies emphasis of the college to our worship that day. But this little sermon also arose out of personal experience. It really was born a few days earlier when I looked at an airborne milkweed seed drifting across the furnace room of the parsonage. This led to my looking up the scientific name of the milkweed genus, which rang a bell in my memory concerning a closing line in one of Plato's dialogues, which led to a little investigation into Greek mythology. Then the book of Genesis, Sigurd Olson and some personal history were mounted on this emerging collage. That's not the way they teach you to do it in seminary. But that's the way they come sometimes.