

Christian Vegetarian Association UK

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Affiliated Ministry
CVA (USA)

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN PAPERS SAY

January 2009

Contributors

A big thank you to the following CVAUK Members:

John Gilheany, Margaret Turner, Carol Jacklin.

You can now view this document on the Internet, go to:
www.christianvegetarian.co.uk and follow link to Christian Media.

I would like to thank Chris Dhondee for all his help in producing this issue and for agreeing to edit future WTCPS publications.

Please note that in future all cuttings should now be sent to Chris Dhondee:

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To help Chris, please send press cuttings on a monthly basis.

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‘What the Christian Papers Say’ – a decadal reflection **by John M. Gilheany**

Just some thoughts on the superb compilation which Chris and Don have put together and basically began in 1999, as a scrapbook of photocopied articles that was circulated among the ‘Link-Up-For-Animals’ and beyond.

(The ‘Link-Up’ emerged from the pan-religious ‘Custodian’ network of vegan and vegetarian campaigners which existed between 1990-96. Unfortunately, the latter group evolved into the essentially anti-Christian but now defunct ‘Spiritual Vegans’ whose website manifesto, nonetheless, retains a certain amount of educational value for the more discerning visitor: http://www.geocities.com/spiritualvegans/Articles/articles_1_1.html)

Looking at the crude collection of incomplete coverage from the Catholic and Anglican press of 1999, the fine facility which the CVAUK have made available in hard copy and on-line reveals the progress and professionalism (to say nothing of unassuming graft) that the association needs in order to eventually become a part of mainstream Christian life.

However, the room for improvement has become just as conspicuous as the sense of attainment over the years. For the Christian press in Britain currently comprises twelve regular, prominent titles; *The Church Times*, *The Church of England Newspaper*, *The Catholic Times*, *The Catholic Herald*, *The Universe*, *The Tablet*, *The Baptist Times*, *The Methodist Recorder*, *The Evangelical Times*, *Evangelicals Now*, *The War Cry* and *The Friend*. There are also a few high-quality contemporary monthly magazines such as the Church of Scotland’s *Life and Work*, *Woman Alive* and *Christianity*.

‘What The Christian Papers Say’ has therefore become something of a misnomer which reflects our lack of understanding of several denominations and our limited influence as an ecumenical body. A particular example of the way in which the situation has overtaken our role within the Churches, as a whole, can be found in this latest compilation.

The Catholic Times – like most of the featured newspapers – has afforded generous coverage to the theological and humanitarian case for animal protection over the years. Last September, the paper published a letter from a mink-breeder who had been put out of business by ‘animal rights propaganda’. There followed several letters from animal rights/welfare/liberation/protection advocates (some of them experts) and the discussion proliferated onto Christian stewardship of farmed animals and vegetarianism – ten letters in all!

It was a notable forum which would have been read by Catholics who may previously have regarded the ban on mink-farming in Britain as having resulted from largely secular concern. So far, so good. **However, had the disgruntled farmer in question been a Baptist, we would have been among the last to know of his grievance.** Our movement would in all likelihood have been castigated without defence and probably *ad nauseum* from letters sympathetic to the plight of a fellow human being, regardless of the relevant circumstances.

The majority of news items which have been collated from ‘monitored’ papers stem from subscriptions or visits to public libraries. In the case of major libraries there are often holdings of several titles that currently escape our attention but are available to read and photocopy on a regular basis. Similarly, the various Theological College libraries throughout the country usually welcome members of the public to obtain a reference pass for a small annual fee of about £10.

At present, there are a handful of CVAUK members monitoring several titles which are often read on a regular basis by other members. Surely it should be possible, from a membership of 140, to expand our awareness and presence among other denominations by connecting with their press. If there are members with a background, or interest in Baptist, Evangelical, Salvationist, or other notable denominations then perhaps you would consider subscribing to one of their newspapers?

Alternatively, there is the library and please note that it need not be necessary for a particular facility to exist on each of our doorsteps! In most cases, the librarian will maintain a stock of each title for at least a year. So even if it meant travelling a few times a year to sift through a batch of papers and make photocopies; this would enable the CVAUK to become truly representative of the Churches in Britain by reaching ethical vegetarians and promoting our values beyond the current sphere of advocacy.

Admittedly, the Church press is read by a relatively small proportion of Christians although it is obviously important to augment our position at this stage. The press comp is largely intended to serve as a resource for campaigning within the Churches. Therefore articles which relate to environmental concern and animal welfare typically feature alongside ethical vegetarianism in order to encourage and inform further activity. Submissions to Chris Dhondee should be scanned and sent via e-mail where feasible on a fairly regular basis (pdf, rtf or doc files). Or send press cuttings by post.

Chris Dhondee’s contact details: Sent press cuttings to : 22 Molyons Road, Ladywell, London, SE13 7XG

Or Email: cdhondee@yahoo.co.uk (Subject Line “CVAUK Press Compilation”) Tel: 0208 690 9703

For those that may not have the time to read over the above or return to it at a later stage, may I just emphasise that...

Chris Dhondee requires more members to get involved with the project and expand our potential.

Please see details above!!!

Thank you...

The Catholic Times

7th September 2008

Animal Rights Propaganda

As a Catholic who spent 35 years as a mink-farmer I object to propaganda that portrays my career as one of a sadist perpetrating cruelties on animals, so I should like to reply to your article on the 'Animal Rights' people that want the papacy to get rid of the fur-lined garments used over the centuries (*The Catholic Times*, August 24). Be aware that these people are all part of a worldwide campaign to stop all uses of animals by mankind no matter the kind.

They are funded by money given to look after animals in America but diverted in the main to support all kinds of activists from terror groups to paying rent-a-mob protesters to swell their numbers of volunteers. Their tactics are long term, using the domino system; first the fur trade, then hunting, then fishing, then cat shows and so on. They target children by means of the internet and indoctrinate them relying on emotion rather than truth and film extremes where they can find them and will even set them up themselves. Young girls are the most susceptible and these tactics can turn personalities from normal to disturbed.

Very few will know of the damage these same people have done to the livelihood of thousands of people worldwide (I lost my living, my means of rearing a family of five through their lies) while they get fat on genuine donations given to animal welfare, not their groupings.

Few will know of the fate of the indigenous peoples of the northern forests who have to sell their animal occupied forests for timber and mining when unable to sell their surplus furs, even when foot-traps were banned. Unable to survive in cities they simply died out riddled with alcoholism etc.

Their ideology is not Christian. Within Christian thought animals do not have 'rights', only man has 'rights' given by God to Adam. Animals were put on earth for man's use and benefit, this means for food, clothing, for work, as companions, and so on. Man however has responsibilities in this field, and society as a whole has formulated the parameters, accepted by the Church throughout 2,000 years. These 'Animal Rights' groups however, wish to impose their ideals over those of society and are known to use tactics that are anti-human to achieve them.

Do not be fooled by their pious words as though God *is* on their side, and imagine what they would describe Jesus's act when he ordered the apostles to lower their nets and drag on board numerous fish for the tables of man, or when the Father asked for sacrifice of lambs and all that entailed.

Redmond O'Hanlon, Dublin

(Replies on the next page. Ed)

14th September 2008

Drive to a healthy change of lifestyle

By Agnetta Sutton

OVERALL, this year's August weather was poor - as it was last year too. If this was the result of global warming, then it might be bad news. But it could be mere chance. Next year we may have a good August. However, according to the International Panel on Climate Change, there is no doubt that the planet is heating up and that humankind's pollution is the cause.

What most of us may not have realised, however, is that weekly pollution due to cars and industry affects the weekend weather. That is to say, not only does human activity and technology affect long-term weather patterns, but even certain smaller day-by-day fluctuations can be traced to human pollution. Of course, this is hardly surprising. We all know that the Chinese made enormous efforts to minimise the smog in Beijing during the Olympic Games. They reduced the traffic. They stopped work in factories. And in the short term it did help. As to the weekend weather, the on-line version of the science journal *Nature* (*nature news*) recently (August 13) carried an article reporting that scientists have shown that pollution is affecting the weekend weather in a number of European countries. That is, climatologists studying weekly weather cycles have found that week-day pollution by cars and industry is giving Spain milder and sunnier winter weekends, but colder and wetter summer weekends. The UK and western parts of France are also getting drier and sunnier winter weekends. But by contrast, Iceland's and Greenland's winter weekends are wetter. And Germany fares worst of all. It gets more rain at the weekends all year round. Does this mean week-day pollution is good for some of us?

Hardly! Pollution is not a good thing for our lungs. And it is not a good thing for the global weather. Scientists who urge us to minimise pollution and to look for green and renewable energy are undoubtedly right. And as argued in the editorial of *Nature* (August 14), "the ultimate answer to humanity's energy problems rises every morning and sets every evening". The sun provides an inexhaustible source of energy for human consumption. In addition its energy is green.

Not only is sunshine a source of energy in itself, but in addition the sun makes water rise from the oceans only to fall as it cools over the planet's landmasses. It makes plants grow. It drives the currents of the seas such as the Gulf Stream which transports warm water to our coasts. The sun is the ultimate energy source of life on earth. We must harness its energy. Unfortunately, we have done little of the sort. Instead of wisely tapping sun energy, we are trapping too much sun-heat in the atmosphere with our pollution and promoting global

warming. We should reduce the use of carbon-dioxide emitting fuel and turn to green energy - all of which is directly or indirectly derived from the sun.

It is time to turn to wind power, water power and plants. Both wind power and hydroelectric plants offer great possibilities, as do solar panels. It is possible to place wind turbines far out at sea as well as on land. More research should go into the use of new materials for solar panels, new materials capable of capturing more sunlight and produce cheap energy. The author of the *Nature* editorial is rightly calling for more research in the energy sector. Praising researchers in California's Silicon Valley for their entrepreneurial culture, the editorial calls for more of the same sort.

Indeed, the message is that not only governments but also private enterprise and even individual researchers should play their part and look for means to reduce greenhouse gasses and ways of producing cheap green power. But what can you and I do. We can insulate our homes in order to use less energy. We might install solar panels - when they become cheaper and more efficient. Those of us who use cars can change to smaller cars - unless we have big families to transport. Or we can change to cars that don't run on petrol.

My Gothenburg-based brother has just bought a bio-fuel car. Of course, bio-fuel has got a bad press in many quarters. But whether it is a bad or good thing depends on how it is produced and whether its production has adverse side-effects. When bio-fuel is produced from waste, such as saw-dust, and its production does not involve deforestation or use of land that would be better used to produce food for man and beast, then there is surely nothing wrong with it.

Then there are hybrid cars, part battery-electric and part conventional. These cars use their combustion engine to charge a battery that produces extra energy when the car is accelerating. This reduces fuel consumption. They also use 'regenerative braking', in which the electric engine helps to slow the vehicle while converting the kinetic energy to electricity that can be stored for later use. Hybrids are said to be very energy efficient in town, but less so on longer journeys. But the best way of making savings on petrol or diesel is to drive as little as possible. As a bonus this also promotes good health. #

14th September 2008

Letter - Barry Mills

Redmond O'Hanlon protested (last week) at the way he was portrayed in your article. I protest at the way his letter portrayed me. As a Christian active in both the Christian and secular animal rights movements, I found his description of us so full of fantasy that it was totally unrecognisable. Animal rights activists want compassion and respect for animals, and the ones I know support human rights causes too. Christian animal rights campaigners are nearly always pro-life and are thus consistent, not selective, in compassion.

The Bible shows that animals were not put on earth for human use, but for God's glory and to praise him; they were also made as companions for humans. Human rebelliousness against God (after The Fall) destroyed this happy ideal. Departure from the intended non-violent ideal of Creation (Gen 1) was only permitted (not commanded) as a result of human rebellion, which led to animal sacrifice until stopped by Jesus' own. In a fallen world in Jesus' time fish were probably essential for food, but not for many of us now: certainly the cruel vanity of fur is not needed. Proverbs 12,10 contrasts "righteousness" and "wickedness" in treatment of animals; and Isaiah 11, 6-9 promises no death when the knowledge of God is complete. So righteousness and Kingdom values are what I pursue: please help me.

Barry Miles, 236 Streatham Road, London, SW16 6NY 0208 769 4028

21st September 2008

Letter - Deborah Jones

Mr O'Hanlon (Letters, September 7) is naturally bitter at having lost his job as a mink-farmer, but his calumnies against some 'animal-rights' people need to be addressed. Catholic Concern for Animals is not funded by anybody other than our members, and we certainly do not support violence in any form. Our goals are, yes, long-term – the transformation of cruelty into compassion.

Target children? We wish! 'Young girls are more susceptible'? Yes, research has shown than more girls/women than men are concerned about the plight of suffering animals – but that does not mean they have 'disturbed personalities'!

Our ideology is definitely Christian – and our tactics are those of any church group: persuasion, education, and prayer. The subject of animals in the Bible requires theological explanations beyond the remit of a letter. As to 'rights', we follow Cardinal Heenan's assertion that it is God who has the right not to have his animal creation abused. We also follow the Catechism's condemnation of causing animals 'to suffer or die needlessly' – and there is certainly no need for anyone, other than a mink, to wear a mink coat. We do not consider mink-farmers to be sadists, for that implies they would derive warped pleasure from the cruelties they inflict on wild animals. Not sadists, just wrong.

Dr Deborah Jones, Catholic Concern for Animals, Cheltenham

21st September 2008

Letter - Mark Glover

As a campaigner against the fur industry, I am often confronted with the barbed comments of people involved in the trade who, I believe, have lost the animal welfare arguments and now resort to insults. (Redmond O'Hanlon, Letters, 7 September).

It is surely better to examine the arguments rationally and allow everyone to make up their own minds. Fur factory farming (Mr O'Hanlon used to be one) involves the intensive rearing of (mostly) mink and fox in small barren wire cages to be killed by gassing or electrocution for a product no-one needs - fur. These animals are unlike any other animals reared on farms. They are still essentially wild, they are carnivores, predators, highly intelligent, inquisitive and, in the case of mink, solitary. To breed them in factory farms is inherently inhumane.

A report by the European Commission's expert veterinary group concluded that 'current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur'. This serious criticism is an echo of a statement by the Farm Animal Welfare Council made way back in 1989 in which it expressed 'disapproval' of fur farming and would not even look at producing a code of conduct for breeding fur animals 'to avoid giving it the stamp of approval which a Government-backed Welfare Code would imply.'

When fur farming was banned in the UK, Elliot Morley, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, stated the principal reason for the proposed ban was 'public morality'. The government, he said, believed it was 'wrong to keep animals solely or primarily to slaughter for their fur.' He went on to say: 'Fur farming is not consistent with a proper value and respect for animal life. We agree, as do the vast majority of people in the UK who wanted to see an end to this cruel business.

Simply to throw insults and smears at those who oppose unnecessary animal cruelty as O'Hanlon does, indicates he has nothing really to say on the subject. In fact he sounds embittered.

Mark Glover, Director, Respect for Animals, Nottingham, Tel: 0115 9525440 www.respectforanimals.org

September 28th 2008

Respecting rights of animals

THE concept of animal rights is far from incompatible with the future of Christian ethics. In recent years the theory that God has rights which may be violated when creation is needlessly harmed has acquired considerable momentum. However, the ethos itself has been around for some time. Cardinal Manning - a leading figure of the Victorian anti-vivisection movement - was known to defend animals on the similar basis of upholding human duties towards them.

There are no such ethical excuses necessary, however, for the exercise of decent conduct and compassion towards non-human beings. In the 1920s and 30s, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral became the leading advocate of animals' rights (as it was then termed) although his apparent belief in the necessity of a meat-inclusive diet led to frequent tussles with the Vegetarian Society. Dean Inge's main critic within the vegetarian movement was an Anglican clergyman who produced a booklet on the matter which concluded: "The gift of life carries with it the gift of the right of life with all other creatures of the divine power and grace."

It was the author's belief that life itself is inevitably precious to the individual bearer, regardless of species. In that sense, it seems unlikely that the Creator could be fundamentally indifferent towards the interests of creatures that have been bestowed complex forms of awareness and sensitivity. Where 'rights' inevitably conflict in our fallen world, we have a choice between the Cross, or vivisection laboratories; abortion clinics and just war battlefields. In the case of most forms of animal exploitation (such as the commercial breeding of mink for their coats) there is much to answer for and not to animal rights activists but the Creator of kindred life.

In 1970, the Bishop of Norwich wrote: "We speak of human rights. I think we should also speak of animal rights and natural rights, but there must be some radical re-orientation in current attitudes and thinking before these rights are recognised and respected."

It may not be possible to devise a perfect protocol for human interaction with the rest of creation but we can either respond to divine prompting or the law of the jungle. If anyone is interested in the growth of Christian animal rights advocacy over recent decades there is a web site archive at: www.all-creatures.org/fol
John M Gilheany, Roath, Cardiff

5th October 2008

We Need to care for All God's creatures

AS Christians we need to care for the creatures which God created. Many laboratory experiments are unnecessary and cruel, including those which test chemical cleaning products on animals. Animals are sensitive and feel pain and fear.

Christians should be concerned about battery hens kept in cages so small that they have no room to even open their wings - God created hens to walk outside in the sun and dust bathe, but this natural behaviour is denied them.

Antibiotic resistance in humans is increased when antibiotics are routinely fed to farm animals to stop disease spreading in the cramped unhealthy factory farm conditions. Humans consume small quantities of the antibiotics when they eat the meat and then these drugs can fail to work in hospitals.

Christians who can afford it should buy some free-range organic produce to minimise the suffering of God's creatures and to encourage ethical farming.

Ann Wills, Ruislip, Middlesex

5th October 2008

Make Time for God's creation

James Hastings

The RSPCA has asked churches to be more animal friendly by celebrating special services as part of today's Animal Welfare Sunday. The call follows the launch of an initiative by the Church of England in June, *Time for God's Creation*, which encouraged Christians across England to put the environment at the heart of their worship this past month. Mark Watts, RSPCA chief executive, said: "Many people tend to think that animal abuse happens at the hands of just a few but, in truth, as a society we need to think far more deeply about how our lifestyle impacts on animals and how we may be, directly or indirectly, permitting suffering. "Faith groups can play an important role. We hope they will seize the moment and take a lead in promoting responsible attitudes towards animals."

Deborah Jones, general secretary of Catholic Concern for Animals, backed the idea. "The CCA endorses the call for the Churches to become far more involved and concerned about the plight of animals," she said. "If we Christians do not take a lead in spearheading the movement to create a more compassionate and responsible society, we shall be seen to be in dereliction of our vocation to help the weakest and most vulnerable, whether of people or of the animal kingdom. It makes no sense to support environmental concern without realising that the earth is the environment for all other living creatures too. As such we have a double duty to tend it and protect all who live on it."

The RSPCA was founded by Anglican priest the Rev. Arthur Broome in 1824. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, is the charity's vice patron. #

5th October 2008

Letter - Ann Wills

Further to the letters about animals, I think that as Christians we need to care for the creatures which God created. Many laboratory experiments are unnecessary & cruel, including those which test chemical cleaning products on animals. Animals are sensitive & feel pain & fear.

Christians should be concerned about battery hens kept in cages so small that they have no room to even open their wings. God created hens to walk outside in the sun & dust bathe, but this natural behaviour is denied them.

Antibiotic resistance in humans is increased when antibiotics are routinely fed to farm animals to stop disease spreading in the cramped unhealthy factory farm conditions. Humans consume small quantities of the antibiotics when they eat the meat & then these drugs can fail to work in hospitals.

I think that Christians who can afford it should try and buy some free-range organic produce to minimise the suffering of God's creatures & to encourage ethical farming. Also perhaps get details of a group called 'Veg For Lent' who help Christians give up meat for Lent. www.veg4lent.org

Best wishes, **Ann Wills**

12th October 2008 Global crisis needs rethink on religion and economies'

By Paul Donovan

ENVIRONMENTAL specialist and Columban Fr Sean McDonagh has called for "a radical rethink of religion and economics".

Delivering the homily at St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Fr McDonagh claimed that the economic problems of today were to do with an unregulated market economy.

"The business of governance is to organise society in such a way that it stops the rich and powerful from pursuing an economic ideology which impoverishes the people, creates huge gaps between the rich and poor and destroys the environment, locally and globally," said Fr McDonagh.

"Our political representatives, globally and locally, have not just attempted to close the door after the horse has bolted. From the late 1970's, they began by selling off the doors; next they auctioned off the roof and the wall of the barn, through a continuous process of deregulation. "Why should we be surprised at what is happening now?" Fr McDonagh expressed his concern "that the very people who, until a few months ago, were telling us that we had reached the end of history and that economic growth would continue almost indefinitely, are back on the talk shows explaining how we got into this mess and telling us how to get out of it".

He called on the governments of Britain and Ireland to "engage in some Keynesian pump priming by investing in energy efficiency and renewable forms of energy". Fr McDonagh also called for our religion to focus more on the needs of all of human kind and the world in which we live. #

12th October 2008 Battery farming is good for hens' welfare

ANN WILLIS is correct when she says "We need to care for all God's creatures" (Letters, *The Catholic Times*, October 5). Unfortunately, she like many others simply do not understand the welfare reasons for keeping laying hens in battery cages. By separating the hens from their manure, mortality was reduced dramatically. There is no need to feed therapeutic antibiotics to battery hens and it is in fact illegal to do so. This cannot, therefore be causing the build up of antibiotic resistance in humans.

Antibiotics are often prescribed by veterinarians for free range hens infected with bacterial and protozoan infections picked up from range. This is necessary because of their contact with wildlife and their own faeces. There are well documented figures to show that the move to free range is responsible for over a million UK chickens dying per year. Unfortunately, farmers are attracted to keep hens on range because of higher egg and chicken prices, in spite of the higher mortality. Many well intentioned people are supporting systems, which result in lower welfare, to the financial benefit of others, who ought to know better.

A good stockman knows that battery hens sound happy, even though they have very little space. When given extra space they do in fact fare less well and sound less happy. I have 50 years experience of battery hens. My first experience of them was on a farm owned by the Jesuits. I have never owned a chicken. My interest is the hens themselves.

Dr A Marsden (non medical), Clitheme, Lancashire

12th October 2008 Showing concern for persecuted

I DO not doubt the sincerity of those who have written in support of 'animal rights' (*The Catholic Times*, September 21). It goes without saying that we should be kind to all animals. Animals, of course, are quite distinct from human beings. God said that man was to be "masters" over them. (Gen 1:26) Animals have no "eternal souls" for us to be concerned about saving. I am however more concerned about our fellow human beings (Christians) who are suffering persecution every day for their Christian/Catholic faith.

Whether this suffering is happening in North Africa or in Indonesia, it all makes very sad reading. In eastern India this year, dozens of people have been killed there and many more have been severely beaten. Also, damage has been done to 95 churches or Christian institutions in Orissa State, India,

Some Islamic groups seem to be devoid of all mercy. We see this in the recent terrible death and destruction of the five-star Harriott Hotel in Islamabad. In her article about Walsingham and Our Lady of Ransom, Joanna Bogle refers to these "tensions". (Saints and Feasts, *The Catholic Times*, September 21). As she says, we should pray for the "ransom" of persecuted Christians today. The concerns here, remain serious.

Muslims say that they admire Abraham as their "Father in Faith". But surely Abraham himself would be horrified by all the acts of terror worldwide, since 9/11. What can such mindless violence and terror ever hope to achieve? In these chaotic and disturbing times, let us all give support to Aid to the Church in Need and Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Let us also support the various 'Prisoners of Conscience' appeals. They give a much-needed 'voice to the voiceless'.

Diarmuid Collins, London N13

26th October 2008 Doctor ruffles hen fan's feathers

I read the letter from Dr Marsden with disbelief (*The Catholic Times*, October 12). Despite his claim that he has had 50 years of experience of battery hens, he then states that he has never owned a hen! I am afraid that is patently obvious. If he had spent any time in the company of hens allowed to live as God intended he would know that they naturally exhibit very different behaviour than that allowed under a battery system.

Free range hens have quite a complex hierarchical society and indulge in social behaviour such as dust bathing. Contented hens make low level clucking noises - not the hysterical and desperate noise exhibited in battery sheds. They also naturally roost when evening comes, whereas battery hens are kept under artificial lights. The picture Christ mentions in *Matthew 23:37* of the hen gathering up her chicks under her wings would not be possible in a battery system.

I was also concerned by the limited view of God shown by Diarmuid Collins (Oct. 12). Why cannot we show concern for all living things - why must we limit God's love to human beings only? My view of God is far bigger than that. I believe He loves everything He made - yes human beings have a special place in God's world but surely He didn't create these wonderful and complex other beings for us to neglect and abuse?

Samantha Chandler, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire

9th November 2008 Faith in care for abused animals

The Christian faith has been in the bad books of environmentalists and the animal protection movement since at least the days of the Humanitarian League of a century ago. There is much about the situation which is understandable; as any compassionate soul who has received short shrift from clergy over concern for institutional commercial or recreational cruelty to animals can sorely testify.

The scale of such disillusionment with the Churches, at every level, has grown vast over recent decades. However, the scenario is far from hopeless in terms of Christian witness to forsaken forms of cruelty in western society. Since the 1970s, there has been a notable degree of concern expressed from within the Churches.

Although much of that concern reflects considerable unease at certain attitudes and general inertia which has served to caricature the Christian relationship with creation; there is also a wealth of outspoken insight which is currently being made available for contemporary interest.

Hopefully there will be those among your readership who may share a positive interest in Christian advocacy on behalf of abused animals in modern times. If so, would you please visit and consider mentioning the resource at: www.all-creatures.org/fol

John M. Gilheany, Roath, Cardiff

23rd November 2008

Talking Point

We're all responsible for the environment, but as Professor Philip Booth argues, Christians must give a positive message rather than being apocalyptic.

IN his World Peace Day message Pope Benedict spelled out our responsibilities towards the environment. It was a message of hope. It was also a message that imposes responsibilities upon the faithful. At the same time, in accordance with the best of Catholic social teaching from the Vatican, it forcefully defined the environmental problem whilst stressing that it was "important for assessments . . . to be carried out prudently, in dialogue with experts and people of wisdom, uninhibited by ideological pressure to draw hasty conclusions". Despite this, many Christians who make statements about environmental issues seem to make hasty judgements, succumbing to ideological pressure which often emanates from environmental organisations that have views on issues such as population control that should be unacceptable to Catholics.

The Christian message on the environment should be an optimistic one. After all, the earth's resources are a great blessing. Our message should stress the possibilities of a rightly ordered world, rather than being an apocalyptic message that sees population control and other authoritarian policies as the only way to protect the environment.

But, it is difficult to be optimistic as good news stories on the environment are normally buried. Although, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in 2005, we were told by "experts" how climate change was leading to increased numbers of severe hurricanes, there was no coverage the following year when the low number of hurricanes surprised the same experts. Indeed, if you search the Internet, it is far easier to find stories predicting hurricane catastrophes in 2006 than stories describing the actual level of activity during that year's hurricane season! In 2006/07, in the UK, a winter cold snap prompted a splurge of newspaper articles on how global warming could cause the breakdown of the Gulf Stream and would lead to freezing winters for the UK. But there were few follow-up articles looking at how uneventful and "average" that winter was taken as a whole.

The news media, environmental campaigners and politicians all have an incentive to highlight bad news. The news media wants to sell papers; environmental campaigners are in the business of trying to achieve political change; and politicians wish to prepare public opinion for higher taxes and more regulation.

The Catholic Church closer to home sometimes jumps on this bandwagon. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales took an outlandishly pessimistic view of the environment in 2002 - something that I have discussed at length in an earlier *Catholic Times* article. More depressing still, the diocesan newspaper of Arundel and Brighton, in its lead front page article in February 2008, quoted, uncritically and without qualification, campaigner George Monbiot stating that the capitalist system could not protect the environment and "it had to go". Such a statement cannot be justified given the evidence, nor can it be justified in terms of Catholic social teaching. Indeed, the appalling environmental performance of Communist countries and other countries that do not have functioning market economies is now a matter of undisputed record. While some Christians may feel that a market economy does not provide all the answers to environmental problems, there is no justification for assuming that an economy without a functioning market system will do so.

Indeed, the best way to approach environmental problems is often rather subtle and undramatic and quite in accordance with the parameters of a free economy as defined in, for example, *Centesimus annus*. Hasty policy interventions frequently have unfortunate unintended consequences for the environment. For example, the promotion of bio-fuels in place of fossil fuels has led indirectly to the destruction of important areas of forestry as well as to food shortages. An analysis of the good news can provide policy lessons. Most readers probably assume that deforestation is a worldwide, increasing and intractable problem. It is a problem, but it is neither global nor increasing. Recent evidence from the United Nations suggests that the global rate of net deforestation is falling. Nearly all the net loss is now confined to South America and Africa. The US, Europe and Asia are reforesting on balance. Furthermore, there is a very strong correlation between economic growth and reforestation

No nation with an annual GDP per capita of more than \$4,600 per annum had net forest loss in 2000-2005. There is a similar pattern with regard to soil erosion.

There are many reasons for the relationship between reforestation and national income. As we become richer we value environmental resources more: if we have a choice between clearing the land for farming and having insufficient food, clearing the land will tend to win: economic growth removes the need for such stark choices. Also, the conditions that promote a healthy economy can also promote a sound environment. Private ownership, charging for the use of environmental resources and the effective promotion of the rule of law allow people to exploit the fruits of environmental resources whilst promoting the virtues of stewardship and conservation and helping to ensure that illegal environmental destruction is prevented.

Air quality is another environmental indicator that has improved dramatically in Western market economies. The US cut average total pollutant emissions by one eighth between 2000 and 2005. This is in itself remarkable as some pollutants had already fallen so far by 2000 that further falls were simply impossible! Lead emissions fell by 98.6 per cent between 1970 and 2000 and sulphur dioxide emissions by about 50 per cent.

A good example of how government meddling in an economy can damage the environment is seen in the markets for oil and water. Much is said about the insatiable demand for these commodities in the developing world. There are real challenges. But huge oil subsidies in countries such as China and India simultaneously damage their economies, promote waste and favour methods of production that use obsolete, dirty technologies. NGOs often campaign against water pricing in under-developed countries, but the absence of water pricing gives incentives to farmers to plant water-hungry crops in dry areas and generally favours the large industrial producer and farmer over the small entrepreneur.

Regarding the big global issue of climate change, while the scientific and economic debates continue to rage, there is no reason why Christians should feel obliged to take one side or the other. As the Holy Father has indicated, they should act thoughtfully and prudently. One of the problems frequently associated with climate change is the calamities from adverse weather events. Hurricanes, tornadoes, monsoons and the consequent landslides are all said to be increasing and are set to increase further.

Activists, including Christian charities, point to a particular impact in poor countries. Hundreds of nuns and priests recently marched on Parliament to demand action. But what the alarmists fail to point out is that deaths from adverse weather events are actually falling. This is despite the growth in the world's populations and the fact that, as population expands, people often have to inhabit less safe environments. So why are deaths falling? The reason is because as countries become more prosperous communities can adapt and protect themselves from the effects of adverse events. Once again, the political and economic framework that promotes prosperity also helps provide the conditions that enable people to deal with environmental problems. We should beware of policy action that undermines a free economy as that will undermine the ability of communities to adapt to climate change which is a continual feature of our planet.

None of this is to suggest that Christians, at a personal level, should be other than prudent in the way they live. CAFOD'S motto "Live simply" is a good ideal for Christian living - though perhaps not mainly for the reasons CAFOD suggest. But we should not be obsessive and we should not treat environmentalism as a quasi religion. Still less should we assume that any action taken by governments in the name of environmental protection is necessarily justified or beneficial.

Professor Philip Booth is editorial and programme director at the Institute of Economic Affairs

30th November 2008

Animal Testing and medical progress

Agnetta Sutton

THERE was little reaction on the part of animal-rights activists when the new, and controversial, £18 million animal-research laboratory in Oxford opened on November 11. Nonetheless, the university is seeking a permanent exclusion zone around the laboratory to restrict demonstrators and protect personnel.

This is because activist demonstrations and more or less violent acts of intimidation of builders have already delayed the building of the biomedical sciences complex by two years. At present there is a temporary injunction restricting demonstrations and picketing close to the building and also within 100 yards of the residence of any protected person linked to the laboratory.

There is no doubt that some people feel strongly about animal research. Unfortunately, some even resort to threats and the use of violence against scientists engaged in this kind of work. Others, adopting a more reasonable approach, argue for alternative ways of testing new medicines and technologies. Many of them would agree with Micky Gordon of the anti-vivisection group, Dr Hadwen Trust. On the day of the opening she said: "When subjected to the scrutiny of independent scientific reviews, time and again animal experiments fail to demonstrate relevance to human patients. By contrast, non-animal methods like advanced human cell cultures, molecular studies, computer modelling or organs and 3-D human tissue engineering represent the future of medical progress."

It is, of course, true that humans and animals are different. Hence, tests on animals cannot always tell us exactly what would happen if humans were subjected to the same medication or medical procedure as a tested animal. Yet without animal experimentation many medical developments would never have materialized. Indeed, it is not difficult to come up with a long list of medical advances only made possible thanks to animal research.

Among them are blood transfusions in the 1910s, the first modern anaesthetics in the 1920s, broad spectrum antibiotics in the late 1930s, a number of different vaccines in the 1940s and 1950s, chemotherapy in the 1960s, efficient drugs to control transplant rejection, new drugs to treat viral diseases in the 1980s; and combined drug therapies to control HIV infection in the 1990s. Indeed, most modern drugs, vaccines, anaesthetics and surgical techniques have been tested on animals before being tried on humans.

This is why the Catholic Church sanctions animal experimentation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that: "Medical and scientific experimentation on animals is a morally acceptable practice if it remains within reasonable limits and contributes to caring for or saving human lives" (para. 2417). And in order to give an indication

about what is meant by "reasonable limits", it also states that "it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly" (para. 2418). This is obviously with the implication that experiments with animals should not be undertaken when there are other ways of obtaining the knowledge sought.

So what is the Oxford policy? According to Professor Alastair Buchan, head of the Medical Sciences Division at Oxford, animals are only used in their research "where no other technique is available: and the university is absolutely committed to replacing animal use wherever possible".

Other university officials say that the animals used in research will be given better living conditions in the new building. They also point out that 98 per cent of the animals used are rodents and that most of them are mice. There will be no cats, dogs or farm animals in the new research complex. But there will be macaque monkeys. This is because the scientists say monkeys are required for research into some human diseases such as Hepatitis C, which only affects primates.

But, of course, there will be no apes. The use of apes in animal research is not permitted under UK law. Indeed, it is banned in all EU member states. As for the monkeys, we are being told that they will no longer be kept in individual cages. Instead they will be allowed to live in small groups so that they can socially interact as they would in their natural environment.

Of course, in the best of all possible worlds there would be no animal research. But it may be noted that even the world's most well-known animal-rights advocate, Professor Peter Singer of Princeton University, thinks that some animal experimentation is necessary for medical progress. That said, many non-activists are very unhappy about the use of monkeys in animal research. This is why the justifiability of experiments involving monkeys is presently being debated in Brussels. A number of MEPs want an EU ban on experiments with monkeys. But as long as scientists insist that they need to use monkeys in order to find new cures for human diseases, it might be unrealistic to hope for a total ban on this practice.

The use of animals to test cosmetics is a different matter. This has been banned in the UK since 1998. Some animal testing of cosmetic products is still allowed in parts of Europe. But as from March 2009, the use of animals to test finished cosmetic products and ingredients for the making of cosmetic products will be banned throughout the EU, as will all sales of cosmetics tested on animals.

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7th December 2008

*** Bishop in 'go green' bid to save the planet ***

James Hastings

Catholics are being challenged to take the threat of global warming to the heart of their homes and parishes. In a pastoral letter to be read out in all parishes in his diocese this weekend, a bishop is calling on the Church to use "good theology and good science" as part of an "ecological conversion". Bishop Michael Evans of East Anglia is placing green issues at the centre of the diocesan programme for the next 12 months. He warns that the flat lands of the diocese make it particularly vulnerable to ecological disaster, which he says threatens the planet. While it is right to debate the issue at a national level, the real challenge he says is to accept personal responsibility. "Care for creation in God's name is a profoundly spiritual issue," writes Bishop Evans. "If we are to live truly 'holy and saintly lives as we wait for and long for the Day of God to come', as St Peter asks in today's reading, this must include carrying out God's will for the world he has entrusted to us, and a care for the earth's limited resources which are to be shared with all generations.

"The call to live simply, justly and sustainably is a central part of this. Care for God's creation also includes care for one another and for ourselves, made in the image and likeness of God. The poor of our world are often the first to be affected by its misuse by the rich. "Our day-to-day decisions and life-styles impact on the earth and its people, today and in the future. We are responsible for one another, and we cannot approach the earth and its resources simply as consumers. And so we need to ask ourselves: how can we live simple, responsible and holy lives on this planet, our God-given home?"

Bishop Evans stresses that every Catholic is responsible together for the whole of 'Planet Earth'. However large the problems can seem, and however complex the science, it is wrong to ignore what is happening to the environment. "To give one major example, the Amazonian rain forests are an integral and vital part of our living space as human beings: their ongoing destruction affects us here, just as the way we live here affects others elsewhere, today and tomorrow," he adds. "In our own East Anglia, it can sometimes seem as if Isaiah's prophecy has already been fulfilled: 'Every valley has been filled in, every mountain and hill laid low!' We have particular concerns about threats to our coastlands, the fens, the river flood plains and the Norfolk Broads, as well as more general ecological and environmental worries. Proposed housing developments across our region raise serious questions about their likely impact on the environment and on resources, especially water.

"As caretakers rather than owners of creation, it is essential we do all we can to preserve our resources for future generations, and to take care of this planet entrusted to us by God. We must find effective ways to address issues such as climate change, the protection of bio diversity, and the preservation of the earth's resources. Each of these issues is our concern. We cannot simply leave it to others. It is our sacred duty as stewards of God." #

The Universe

7th September 2008

* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC *

LAST week I discussed how the US Supreme Court opened the flood gates to patenting living organisms in the *Diamond v Chakravarty* decision. The court's view of life also differs radically from the way life is understood, revered and cherished in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The first line of the Bible insists that everything was created by a living God: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (*Genesis 1:1*). The text is very clear that all living beings, including human beings, are creatures of God.

Human beings have a special place in creation, as representatives of God (*Gen. 1:16*). They show their dependence on God in the way they relate to God, to each other, and to the earth. In the initial covenant between God and humanity (*Gen. 1: 28-31*) humans were not allowed to eat flesh. Even after the flood, when Noah was allowed to kill animals for food, there was a prohibition on consuming the animal's blood (*Gen 9. 3-4*). Blood, in the ancient near east, was considered to be the seal of life.

The first account of creation goes on to teach that all beings have their own inherent value. This dignity derives from the fact that they are created by God (*Gen 1: 12, 19-25*). This inherent dignity of creatures increases and intensifies the higher one moves up the chain of being.

In the second account of creation the 'man' is given the privilege of naming the animals (*Gen. 2: 19-20*). The text recognises that all creatures, including humans, have a common origin. While naming gives humans dominion over other creatures, it does not give them the right to oppress and exploit them. Rather, such dominion is to be based on God's own care and sovereignty, as expressed in *Psalms 72: 4-6*, where the righteous God combines concern for the poor with care for all the creatures of the earth.

Patenting life is a fundamental attack on this understanding of life as interconnected, mutually dependent and a gift of God, it opts instead for an atomised, isolated understanding of life. The Bible also recognises that humans are companions and stewards of other creatures in the community of life (*Gen. 2:15 - 17*). God settles the 'man' in the Garden of Eden and invites him to cultivate it and care for it.

Certain limits are put on man's use of the natural world. God gave man the admonition, "You may eat indeed of all the trees in the garden. Nevertheless, of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for on that day you eat it you shall surely die," (*Gen. 2: 16- 17*). In his encyclical on social justice, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II interprets the *Genesis 2: 16-17* text as placing limitations on human misuse of the natural world.

Stewardship does not mean that humans are inventors or owners of life, or that they can dominate and exploit everything in creation. God, and only God, is the creator of life, and all life, including human life is dependent on God.

The Bible is very critical of those who, puffed up with arrogance and pride, refuse to recognise that they are creatures and are thus dependent on God. In the story of the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11*) humans repudiate God's sovereignty and attempt to storm Heaven by their own power.

Living organisms are not merely 'gene machines', or 'gene collections' to be manipulated and exploited for profit. That is why after the US Patent and Trademark Office had patented their first animal in 1987, a group of 24 religious leaders issued the following statement:

"The decision of the US Patent Office to allow the patenting of genetically engineered animals presents fundamental dangers to humanity's relationship with the natural world.

"Reverence for all life created by God may be eroded by subtle economic pressures to view animal life as if it were an industrial product invented and manufactured by humans.

"The dominion granted to (humans) man by the creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of freedom to 'use and abuse' or to dispose of things as one pleases.

" The limitations imposed from the beginning by the creator himself, and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to 'eat of the fruit of the tree', shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws, but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity." #

26th September 2008

Here's to a spot of '*Animal Magic*' in church

Emma Clancy

NEXT Saturday, October 4, is World Animal Day. I am writing about it this week to give people a chance to plan something. World Animal Day was started in 1931 at a convention of ecologists in Florence as a way of highlighting the plight of endangered species. Since then it has grown to encompass all kinds of animal life and is widely celebrated in countries throughout the world. October 4 was chosen as World Animal Day as it is the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals.

It is intended as a day of celebration for anyone in the world who cares about animals. It is not restricted to any one nationality, creed, religion, political belief or ideology.

In the UK, we launched our own World Animal Day on October 4, 2003, and the organisations, groups, animal shelters, places of worship, schools, clubs and individuals who participated in the first of what has

become an annual event, quite simply, helped make history. Now the RSPCA has appealed to churches of all denominations to mark the event.

A new ecumenical initiative has been launched in time for this year's World Animal Day, called Time For God's Creation. The initiative, which will run annually, follows a resolution at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007, attended by representatives of Europe's Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, that the period *"be dedicated to prayer for the protection of creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change."*

At the time Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, said: "I have always been struck by the witness of St Francis; he helps us see that the beauty and goodness of creation are a reflection of God's own beauty and goodness. "Time for God's Creation is a sobering reminder of our obligation to respect and care for our world. Inspired by St Francis we pray and work together for the common good."

Many South American countries hold annual animal blessing ceremonies, as do communities in the Philippines. Cultures where farming is a matter of life and death have their animals blessed to try and guarantee a good harvest.

Services for animals are also popular in America. A procession of pets large and small head toward churches across the country for the annual blessing of the animals. I think it is wonderful that a 12th century man's actions and beliefs are still adhered to around the world. "Walk on the earth gently," St Francis wrote. "Do not pollute the water and the air, be kind to all creatures because God is present in them."

The call now is for more Catholic parishes in the UK and Ireland to get involved. There are a few who embrace the feast of St Francis of Assisi. The church of the Sacred Heart in Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire is one such church. It is in the fourth year of its 'St Francisside' celebrations. Fr John Reville, parish priest invites families and their pets into his church to be blessed. "The children love it," Fr Reville told me. "The animals are all well behaved and there has never been any trouble." Fr Reville said dogs, cats, rabbits, hamsters, gerbils and many other pets come into the church. Obviously the cats are kept in baskets and the rodents in cages but the dogs come and sit in the pews with their owners.

If individual parishes are worried about 'accidents', Fr Reville said none have happened in his church so far. According to Fr Reville, the animals benefit from an individual blessing and the children walk around the church and lay their hands on each animal and help say: "All bless Scamp" or "All bless Tiddles." Forget this being for the delight of children, I thought on hearing this, I want to go and help bless the animals too!

People who aren't animal lovers often can't understand the fuss that pet owners make over their animals. I admit that I will bore anyone who will listen about my dog and I can tell when their eyes glaze over that they possibly aren't as interested as I'd like them to be.

However, the fact is, in this age of environmental awareness, the wise words of everyone's favourite patron saint of animals are a lesson to us all. I just hope a Noah's Ark-style procession takes place in Catholic churches around the land next week! Fr Reville's animal blessing service is taking place the week after on Saturday, October 11. #

October 12, 2008

Don't blame the cows for climate change

Emma Clancy

I read in an article this week that by 2050, milk and meat will have to be rationed because of the environmental impact of rearing cattle for meat and milk. It seems every week there is a 'new scientific report' saying we should or shouldn't eat or use something. We get bombarded with so many do's and don'ts that at times I don't know whether I'm coming or going.

For example, not so long ago, we were told to go to work on an egg, ie: eat one a day. This was then reduced to two a week because of the risk of raising our cholesterol. Now, since TV chef Nigella Lawson's husband has been reported to eat a diet of nine eggs a day to lose weight, it has been said you don't have to limit your egg intake if you have a balanced, healthy diet. Australians have also been told to eat kangaroo steaks rather than beef or lamb as our marsupial friends produce less methane. Poor old Skippy.

Now, as you know, I am a vegetarian, and you'd probably think I would support a decrease in meat consumption. On the contrary, it is a personal choice whether to eat meat or not. For governments to dictate the way people eat is a totally different matter. What right do they have to tell the population what to eat?

What will happen to the farmers who have worked on the land for hundreds of years? A lot of people think arable farms are the way to go because Britain and Ireland could then become self-sufficient. What most people don't know is that even arable farmers sell the remnants of their crops to livestock farmers for winter feed and bedding. If that income was to disappear, they would undoubtedly struggle.

I'm not saying that animals don't produce methane but are the powers that be trying to say that it is the fault of the poor cows that polar ice caps are melting? Are we to believe that the over-use of aircraft, fossil fuels, the dumping of chemical products, oils, industrial and human waste into our oceans have nothing to do with it? It seems ridiculous to me. Cattle in one form or other have been around since prehistoric times. European domestic cattle are thought to be descended from the prehistoric aurochs, which roamed the earth some two million years ago - a long time before the invention of aircraft and cars and the destruction of the rain forests.

Does milk and meat rationing mean we are going to go back to the dark days of malnutrition and rickets? A reduced amount of calcium could lead to brittle bones, rotting teeth and osteoporosis. The skeleton of a young adult male contains about 1.2kg of calcium. There is continuous movement of calcium between the skeleton and blood and other parts of the body. This is finely controlled by hormones. Metabolites of Vitamin D are important in this. increasing re-absorption of calcium by bones. Osteoporosis can be due to calcium deficiency. This involves loss of calcium from the bones and reduced bone density. A low level of calcium in the blood and tissues can also cause hypocalcaemia.

The apostle Peter said in his first letter: "Like new-born babies, all your longing should be for milk." Although he was talking about spiritual milk, the point is that any rationing is likely to be to the detriment of the nation's health. According to other sources, any reduction in farming for meat and milk will not necessarily lead to fewer cattle. It may turn meat into pet food, lead to hill farms and agricultural land being switched to non-food uses while rainforests will still vanish for other western luxuries.

I say the people conducting these so-called scientific experiments should start picking on things their own size and leave the poor cows alone. Could we really get used to a rural landscape without sheep, pigs and Cows?

(I cannot find any response to this ill-informed, uncompassionate article : Ed)

26th October 2008 * Pope's criticism of food shortage *

THE Pope has criticised the continuing shortages of food around the world and said the causes included selfishness and "unbridled speculation". At the root of global hunger was a prevailing materialist culture among developed countries, in which the needs of the poor are routinely forgotten, the pontiff said.

His comments came in a written message on October 16, World Food Day. The text was addressed to Jacques Diouf, director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, Pope Benedict said it was clear, even during recent months of food scarcity in places around the globe, that the international community had the resources to feed all the world's people. Instead, poverty co-exists with abundance, he said, and he gave several reasons.

First, he pointed to the "race for consumption" that has not slowed even during the recent food shortages and which hurts the nutritional capacity of poorer countries.

Second, he said international negotiations have failed to "curb the selfishness of states or groups of countries or to put an end to the unbridled speculation that is affecting the mechanisms of pricing and consumption."

The Holy Father also cited the lack of proper administration of food resources caused by corruption in public life, as well as increasing expenditure on weapons and sophisticated military technology to the detriment of basic necessities.

These causes find their origin in a "false sense of values" in international relations, and "especially in that widespread attitude in contemporary culture which privileges only the pursuit of material goods, forgetting the true nature of the human person and his deepest aspirations," he said.

For these reasons, he said, a campaign against world hunger demanded much more than scientific studies over climate change or bio fuels. Instead, he said, the world needed to recognise that the goods of creation were destined for everyone, and that "in the world community, economic life should be oriented toward the sharing of these goods, toward their long-term usage and the fair distribution of the resulting benefits". #

November 2, 2008 * Fr Shay Cullen *

IF somebody is offering you a beachfront home for a giveaway price, it will be because of climate changes or the crash of the world property and housing markets. Both are man-made and greed driven. Both are catastrophic events for the poor, who are least able to cope with natural disasters but now face factory closures and a world economy in recession. Food prices are racing to an all time high and malnutrition is spreading like a plague.

Global warming - due to the excessive emissions of industrial Co2, the destruction of the tropical rain forests and the release of methane from the melting permafrost of Siberia - is melting the ice mountains of the Arctic and Greenland, as well as huge blocks of Antarctica. The inevitable result is more water in the oceans, which rise to cover our precious beaches and coastal lands. We will have to say goodbye to millions of beach houses, fishing villages, salt ponds, rice-growing deltas and millions of homes.

There are other consequences, too. Millions of displaced people will struggle for food, water and living space and migrate west to the lands of low populations and high surplus food production. This will cause more conflict and possibly even wars.

Sound like a biblical prophecy of doom and gloom? It is the coming reality based on the indisputable scientific facts gathered over the past 20 years, as we race towards the tipping point - the point of no return - when the process cannot be slowed or halted. Global warming will accelerate, as one threatening change contributes to an even greater one.

An ominous spiral of disasters prompted lawmakers from developing nations to meet in Manila in October to consider what could be done to be better prepared for the worst. Senator Loren Legarda, co-convenor of the meeting, called on the rich nations to help prepare the developing nations to be ready to cope with the rapidly approaching "cycle of catastrophe and tragedy".

The declaration said: "Industrialised countries have an historical responsibility for climate change and are morally obliged to financially and technologically assist developing countries in their efforts to reduce their vulnerability and adapt to the consequences, while reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions."

According to OneWorld, a UK charity: "Research by the UK-based International Institute for Environment and Development shows that the 100 countries most vulnerable to climate change together account for just 3.2 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. So, once again it is the poor who are suffering for the irresponsibility of the rich, and will continue to do so. The effects of global warming will cause them untold hardship, deprivation and great social upheavals. The wealthy nations that have caused the problem in the first place have a grave responsibility to alleviate these consequences.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has taken up this issue of social injustice caused by climate change and is examining the relations between it and the violation of human rights. Kate Raworth has produced a report for Oxfam - a UK development and relief organisation - that states: "Climate change was first seen as a scientific problem, then an economic one. Now it is becoming a matter of international justice."

As yet, there is no legal way for the poor nations to challenge these polluters and stokers of the environmental furnace. There may have to be a special international court of climate change settlements established to hold the polluters to account. Until then, we have to continue to lobby and campaign for the rich industrial nations to set the goal of an 80 per cent cut in Co2 emissions by the year 2050 and not settle for the lower 50 per cent cut they envisage.

In the Philippine archipelago, millions are vulnerable to the rises in global temperature and ocean levels, which will ultimately cover islands and wipe out coastal villages. Now is the time to establish a global fund that can meet this challenge. We can all do something positive that will help make this a cleaner, better, and hopefully less polluted world. #

9th November 2008

Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC

IN last week's article I looked at how neo-liberal economic policies forced on Bolivia in the wake of the debt crisis of the 1970s and 1980s destroyed the lives of poor people. The education, healthcare system and social services virtually collapsed as money was drawn off to service the foreign debt. This was caused, in the main, by irresponsible lending policies of minority world banks, especially those with headquarters in the United States. Nine out of the top 11 US banks should have collapsed, but rather than allow that to happen, economic policies were forced on the majority world by minority world countries, ably abetted by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It is only now, in the light of the dubious financial products which many banks were selling during the past two decades, that people are willing to point the primary finger of blame at the banks for causing Third World debt. The impact of paying Third World debt on the Brazilian environment was replicated in scores of countries in the majority world. The IMF began to monitor the Brazilian economy after the debt crisis began in 1982. Social spending was diminished dramatically, leading to a fall in life expectancy to 44 years in the north east of the country. Malnutrition among children was rampant, while 86 million people ate less than the minimum requirement of 2,240 calories per day.

In her book, *The Debt Boomerang: How Third World Debt Harms Us All*, the political economist, Susan George, details how intensified environmental destruction was a "boomerang" effect on poor countries trying to make repayments on their debts. The vicious circle began when countries, often facilitated by the World Bank, borrowed money to build massive projects such as dams, which cause immense environmental destruction. Then, in order to generate foreign currency to pay off the debt, they further damaged the environment through huge logging programmes, mineral extraction or clearing vast areas of primal forest to grow export-oriented crops, such as soya.

Two projects in Brazil that turned out to be colossal environmental disasters are outlined and critiqued by Bruce Rich in his book *Mortgaging the Earth*. One project at Polonoroeste involved building a road to facilitate agricultural colonisation. Despite the fact that previous efforts to colonise the Amazon had failed dismally, and in the face of trenchant criticism from its own internal Operations Evaluation Department (OED), the World Bank poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the Polonoroeste project.

Bruce Rich maintains that the Polonoroeste project transformed Rondonia - an area approximately the size of Oregon or Britain - into a region with one of the highest destruction rates in the Brazilian Amazon.

The impact on the Amerindian population was devastating. Indian lands were systematically pillaged and indigenous people were driven from their ancestral homes. Epidemics of tuberculosis, measles and malaria took their toll on the indigenous population.

The Carajas project created much the same kind of forest devastation in the state of Para, at the other end of the Amazon basin. Here the World Bank lent over \$300 million in order to build a railway to transport high-grade ore to the sea. Included in the original project were plans to build 34 charcoal-burning industries to produce the pig-iron along the railway corridor. The timber for producing the charcoal was supposed to come from eucalyptus plantations but, in reality, it came from standing forests.

The result was massive deforestation in the area. Despite its central involvement in the project, the World Bank attempted to shift responsibility for what happened in Carajas to the Brazilian state mining company, Companhia Vale del Rio Docc (CVRD).

Rich insists that the World Bank's involvement was central, since it funded the basic infrastructure for the devastation that followed. Furthermore, the World Bank's operational staff and the management prevented the banks' own environmental staff from appraising the broader consequences of the scheme.

On a more general level, the relationship between debt and tropical deforestation was striking. Major debtors such as Indonesia and Brazil increased their rate of deforestation by 82 per cent and 245 per cent respectively between 1980 and 1993. The bulk of the Indonesian forest, apart from New Guinea, is already gone and deforestation has continued apace in Brazil, impoverishing not just these countries, but the biosphere as a whole. #

30th November 2008 Professor on a mission to combine ecology and faith

By Emma Clancy

CELIA DEANE-DRUMMOND is professor of Theology and the Biological Sciences at the University of Chester and has been researching eco-theology for the past 30 years. With a background in biophysics and a life-long commitment to the study of plants and the natural world, she took a theological route to study and began looking at the animal world and it's relationship with the three Abrahamic faiths.

Brought up in the Anglican tradition and trained for the Anglican diaconate, Prof Deane-Drummond converted to Catholicism in 1991 and received a doctorate in theology in 1992, both in Manchester. "My reasons for converting were spiritual rather than theological, in the sense that I discerned the Roman Catholic Church was more my spiritual home," she said.

Prof Deane-Drummond feels her vocation is teaching, both through her extensive writing and research and her role at Chester and the other institutions around the world where she has lectured. Her new book, *Eco-Theology* is one of the text books used in her lectures at the University of Chester but is written in such a way that anyone interested in ecology in regards to the Church would benefit from reading it or using it at a parish level "The book is not meant to be a practical guide," Prof Deane-Drummond said. "However, if people read it and decide to act on it, then that is a good thing."

It seems that while most of us are only just waking up to the effects of climate change and the impact our actions have had and continue to have on the natural world, theologians and scientists have been aware of the problem for a long time. "The fact that climate change has only really been highlighted by the mass media is a shame. The fact is, however, that it has been highlighted and it doesn't matter how the general public became aware of it as long as they have," she said.

In the past two years, British farmers have suffered because of extremely wet summers, but different conditions are making life unbearable for farmers on the other side of the world. Some farmers in Australia have been forced to abandon any attempt to cultivate crops because of the heat, drought and other extreme weather conditions.

Prof Deane-Drummond praised CAFOD's Live Simply campaign, but said that too many people, particularly in the West, still have a 'what can I do?' attitude. "I'm not preaching here, I'm guilty myself of not living simply enough," she said but added that every effort to stop climate change is worthwhile, no matter how small.

Responsibility

Prof Deane-Drummond is a member of Chester's Environmental Task Force, which aims to give students and staff the skills and knowledge to live and work more sustainably. "The group is now giving Chester a higher profile on environmental sustainability and is a member of the higher education sustainable network," she said.

In a rapidly-changing world, it is clearly everyone's responsibility to help protect the environment. With this in mind, *Eco-theology* is the perfect book to start the New Year in an environmentally-conscious style. Not only does it inform readers, but it allows us to ask questions and think of ways in which we could do better.

As Catholics, is it not our duty to care for God's creation before it is too late? Why don't we all make a resolution this year to be more eco-friendly? The effects of climate change are not just for world leaders to consider. Think of the poorest communities of the world, who suffer a disproportionate effect of climate change; think of the vulnerability of countries, such as Bangladesh, to flooding but, closer to home, think of the impact on future generations, our children's children.

Eco-Theology is published by Darton Longman and Todd at £13.97. The ISBN is 9-780232-526165.

7th December 2008 * Environmental concerns key for East Anglia in 2009 *

An English diocese has made caring for the environment the key focus in its plan for 2009. The Bishop of East Anglia, Michael Evans, announced at Masses this weekend that the diocese's theme for the coming 12 months would be about caring for God's creation. "The universe was created to express God's love. All creation belongs to him, and our planet is only on loan to each generation of human beings," Bishop Evans said.

"We are part of the interconnected community of creation, called to work with God as his humble and obedient stewards in caring for all he has made. "Since the beginning, human greed and selfishness have had a destructive impact on our God-given environment, and that is more so today than ever before. Our world could all too easily become a wilderness."

Bishop Evans said that Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI had both called for an "ecological conversion", and that people's hearts and minds, attitudes and values, needed to be changed as well as the way they live. The bishop explained how East Anglia was facing a number of environmental problems, such as the ongoing threat to its coast-lands, fens, river flood plains and the Norfolk Broads, as well as more general ecological and environmental worries.

"Proposed housing developments across our region raise serious questions about their likely impact on the environment and on resources, especially water," Bishop Evans added. "As caretakers rather than owners of creation, it is essential we do all we can to preserve our resources for future generations and to take care of this planet entrusted to us by God. "Our day-to-day decisions and lifestyles impact on the earth and its people, today and in the future. "We are responsible for one another and we cannot approach the earth and its resources simply as consumers. We need to ask ourselves how can we live simple, responsible and holy lives on this planet, our God-given home." #

14th December 2008 * Cultivating greater concern for God's creation *

Emma Clancy

I COULDN'T believe my eyes last week when I received a copy of Bishop Michael Evans' pastoral letter for Advent. Each year, the diocese of East Anglia choose a special diocesan theme. This year they've decided on: 'God's gift of creation, a creation made new by the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

"Since the beginning, human greed and selfishness have had a destructive impact on our God-given environment, and that is more so today than ever before. Our world could all too easily become a wilderness," Bishop Evans said in the letter

"Care for creation in God's name is a profoundly spiritual issue. If we are to live truly 'holy and saintly lives as we wait for and long for the Day of God to come', as St Peter asks in today's reading, this must include carrying out God's will for the world he has entrusted to us, and a care for the earth's limited resources which are to be shared with all generations " Has Bishop Evans been reading my column?! I am only joking, however, the fact that such a high-profile figure in the Church is taking on environmental issues is great news and I just hope that more members of the clergy will follow suit. I received an email from a priest in the Midlands, saying that a vegetable garden had been planted at the back of the presbytery and this year, potatoes, cabbages, onions, cauliflowers, lettuce, beans, carrots, parsnips, beetroot and leeks had been grown, shared and enjoyed by parishioners.

Just think how many other parishes across the country could benefit from schemes like this. Not only would it help disadvantaged families and older people, it would bring communities together and possibly, if there is an abundance, could even generate some funding for the parish. In a rural village close to where I live, the local Horticultural Society holds a monthly sale of vegetables and other produce. I'm not saying multi-million pound businesses could be started, but an honesty box near a well-positioned basket of vegetables may be an idea.

It is hoped the theme of the project will give Catholics in East Anglia a greater understanding of their vocation as stewards of God's creation, so that they can make a 'yes' decision to safeguarding creation; contribute towards education on the current threats to creation and enable everyone to contribute at least in small ways to the safeguarding and care of creation and the preservation of our resources for future generations. Also, individual parishes are being invited to review how 'green' their buildings and activities are.

A number of churches and cathedrals are taking note of how they can become more environmentally friendly and Westminster Cathedral itself uses energy saving light bulbs. The church of the Annunciation at Walsingham (incidentally in the diocese of East Anglia) is also the first church in the UK to become carbon neutral because of a high-tech geothermal system which has seen ground probes and heat pumps channel energy from deep in the earth. It seems the diocese of East Anglia is at the forefront of the Church's environmental safe-guarding.

Indeed, in a letter to the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople for the seventh symposium of the religion, science and the environment movement last year, Pope Benedict XVI wrote of the "pressing need for science and religion to work together to safeguard the gifts of nature and to promote responsible stewardship." "Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family," he said.

He continued: "No nation or business sector can ignore the ethical implications present in all economic and social development."

The Pope has sent a clear message to his Church that every individual, group and business has a social and moral responsibility, not only to the environment as a whole but our own environment - our homes, our churches, our work places. It is now time to take control of our actions and do something about it.

I remember watching *Blue Peter* years ago, when I was a child, when recycling first began to be encouraged and introduced into the public's conscience.

My primary school set up a paper recycling scheme where parents and older affiliates to the school took away all the waste paper and the school benefited financially from the recycling. Why are people still kicking their heels about vital matters such as recycling or energy saving?

I will quote Bishop Evans for my closing sentence as I think he really does sum up my point. "Our day-to-day decisions and life-styles impact on the earth and its people, today and in the future." #

28th December 2008

*** Wasting water as others go without ***

Progressio's programme Environmental officer, Sol Oyuela, examines the impact we have on those less fortunate as we waste huge quantities of 'virtual water' every day

FEELING thirsty? While you're putting the kettle on imagine this: one in six people around the world don't have clean, safe water to drink and the situation is getting worse. Experts say that by 2025, one-third of the world's population will face severe water shortages. Assuming that you don't know any-one who fits this category, then you can assume that it is the poor and marginalised that suffer the most from a lack of water. The figures back that up. Some 450 million people in 31 poor countries already face serious shortages of water.

This is without taking into account climate change. It is predicted that global warming will account for about 20 per cent of the increase in global water scarcity. Floods, droughts, sea-level rises, and glacier melting will make poor people even more vulnerable. The irony is that there is enough water in the world to satisfy every-one's needs. But if you're looking outside and it's raining – and in the UK, when isn't it? – it's hard to understand water shortages. We have enough water, but there's a catch – the hidden water that we all use every day without realising it. This is in our food, our clothes and the luxury goods that we buy.

Let me introduce you to the concept of 'virtual water': the volume of water required to produce a product. A can of Cola contains 0.35 litres of water, yet it requires an average of 200 litres to grow and process the sugar in the can. One hamburger takes, 2,400 litres of water to produce. And vegetarians can't claim to be water innocents; 1kg of rice takes 3,400 litres of water while 1kg of wheat takes 1,300 litres.

So how are our dietary choices linked to poor people suffering from water shortages? The UK is the sixth largest importer of 'virtual water' in the world and almost half of this water comes in the form of agricultural products. Basically, the water used to produce our food is therefore not available for local people. Our food is grown. Others go thirsty.

Last October, I visited our partners in Ica, a coastal city in Peru's sandy, mountainous desert and saw this in reality. Large-scale agricultural companies which grow asparagus for export have been established in the area and are draining the region's already scarce groundwater resources. As a result, people living close by are experiencing water shortages. They only have water in their taps for one hour a day, and can no longer grow their own crops.

In the UK alone, we import 8,5 million cubic metres of virtual water year just from asparagus. Our choice of buying Peruvian asparagus from supermarkets is directly limiting the access to water of Ica's population. But that's not the end of the story. These same agro-export companies provide the local women with jobs, so the solution to Ica's water problems does not lie in banning Peruvian asparagus from our supermarkets; this would just create unemployment in Ica's already poverty-stricken population.

The expanding agribusiness-based region of Ica is today responsible for 20 to 30 per cent of Peru's agricultural export earnings. Ica alone accounts for 50 per cent of the harvested acreage and 40 per cent of the harvest of asparagus production, and, together with the more northern province of Libertad, they have made Peru the second largest producer of asparagus in the world.

The question is, has this benefited Ica's poor? The answer is 'no'. Mortality rates, nutrition and literacy figures have not changed significantly as a result of the agricultural boom. The women working for the asparagus export companies say that a normal day may start at 3am or 4am to cook, clean and prepare things for the family, before leaving for work. More than half of the women I met have small children and are forced to leave them with relatives, neighbours or older brothers or sisters. They work long hours and have little, if any, access to social services.

So what can we do about it? We can start by becoming more aware of the hidden role that water plays in our daily lives and reduce our consumption of water-intensive products. We can save water by wasting less food and by recycling. The business sector has a key role to play too. As consumers, we can put pressure on retailers and food manufacturers to ensure that they use water sustainably. We can do something about this and we must, if we are to help a third of the world's population avoid going thirsty. #

The Catholic Herald

12th September 2008

**** What is the greatest threat to the planet? **
The Vatican? The poor? Heavy industry? Meat-eaters?**

The world's resources are running out and many environmentalists blame the Church's teaching.

Mark Dowd investigates their allegations.

It's some seven months now since I left the world of television to begin a new post as an environmental campaigner with Operation Noah. As climate change has shot up the agenda of concern, there has been no shortage of requests for public appearances up and down the country on the theology, science and politics of global warming. And in among all the discussions on stewardship, melting ice caps and the search for a successor to the Kyoto Treaty I have noticed a pattern. Whenever certain members of the audience discover you are a Catholic, in a flash, before you can even say *Humanae Vitae*, out it pops - the P-word.

The P-word we are told, is "the elephant in the room" (*how many times have I heard that phrase since January?*). Now this is odd. "The elephant in the room" (according to that icon of modern reference tools, Wikipedia) is "a term referring to a controversial issue that is obvious, but which is ignored by a group of people out of embarrassment or taboo".

Population, ignored? I think not. In recent weeks we have been spattered by a host of Malthusian offerings offering a simple formula; cut back the number of humans and many of the environmental problems of the world will disappear. First it was a *British Medical Journal* editorial advocating a maximum of 17 million as the optimum population figure for Britain (which 17 million, it did not say). Then we had the entertaining, but frequently rather excitable, Johann Hari of the *Independent* advocating the "building of a "global anti-Vatican" and arming the world's poorest women with those vital tools of contraception and abortion to keep a lid on unnecessary births. At least he had the honesty to preface his remarks with the words: "This is a column I don't want to write. Its subject is ugly."

Ugly indeed. For in truth, it's easy to see how such sentiments, taken to their logical conclusions, end up in state-sponsored Orwellian nightmares of enforced sterilisation and the like, scenarios in which individual dignity is trampled over and faceless bureaucrats inside government ministries ride roughshod over what should be the most intimate and private area of human life. So what's the truth about population and the climate threat and what should a responsible Catholic approach be?

There's no doubt that the Genesis edict to "subdue the earth and multiply" has been taken to heart and acted upon by homo sapiens with great gusto. A global population of one billion at the start of the 20th century has risen to six and a half and is headed for nine billion by 2050 at current rates of expansion.

But is population per se the big factor in our anxiety about spiraling carbon emissions? Closer examination cautions against any mono-causal analysis. On the latest birth/death net figures, Britain is currently adding roughly 150,000 new lives to the global population each year. The annual figure for a country like Bangladesh is way above at over three million. Yet each British citizen per year is responsible for an average 11 tons of carbon dioxide-the figure for Bangladesh would be nearer half of one ton. A Bangladeshi couple would need to have 22 children for each one in Britain for the environmental impact to be comparable. Put like this, the issue swiftly moves away from population to consumption.

And just as the Chinese get upset at finger-wagging Americans and Europeans lecturing them on coal-fired power stations given our legacy of a 150 years of smoked-stacked industrialisation, so countries like Bangladesh and others think it a bit rich to be told they are the fount of ecological damage when the rich nations of the world are tucking into 10 to 20 times their share of the carbon cake per capita.

So should we be worried about population at all? Can we, in a world of intensive agriculture and GM crops, cope with any number? A responsible answer would be no. Limits apply in all situations and this is no exception. But you would think from the anti-Catholic stereotypes that abound among some environmentalists that Church teaching in this area is just downright irresponsible. I've come across more than one or two fellow "greens" in recent months who believe that the Holy See's main goal is to out-breed global Islam and win some kind of numbers war. Compare that crude analysis though with the words of John Paul II in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: "One cannot deny the existence, especially in the southern hemisphere, of a demographic problem which creates difficulties for development. One must immediately add that in the northern hemisphere the nature of this problem is reversed: here, the cause for concern is the drop in the birth rate with repercussions on the ageing of the population, unable even to renew itself biologically."

Seven years later, in a meditation, he developed these points further:

He said: "Catholic thought is often misunderstood... as if the Church supported an ideology of married couples to procreate indiscriminately and without thought for the-future. But one need only study the pronouncements of the Magisterium to know that this is not so. In deciding whether or not to have a child, they [couples] must not be motivated by selfishness or carelessness, but by a prudent, conscious generosity that weighs the possibilities and circumstances, and especially gives priority to the welfare of the unborn child."

Measured and sane words.

So what's the way forward? Taking first the southern hemisphere, if restraining numbers is to be achieved without recourse to crass authoritarianism, every study shows that the key approach is through raising standards of female education and literacy. Women who excel in these areas frequently, according to the vast majority of research literature, undergo a transformation in attitudes to family planning.

This is an area in which the Church, due to its myriad of religious orders and care agencies, can be proud of. All over the world, we know there are thousands and thousands of individuals whose lives are inspired by standards of learning among the poor of the world. Such programmes are designed to get families out of poverty and it is poverty that is frequently cited as another enormous factor in the population boom. Anecdotal evidence is all I can offer here, but in more than 15 years of documentary making in countries as varied as Brazil, Sierra Leone, India and Indonesia, I came across many parents who were no strangers to 8, 10, nay even 12 children. You engage them in conversation and time again you're aware of a lottery mindset that is informed by the view that says; "Just one child, one child a success, a doctor, an administrator and we'll have that elusive breadwinner to transform the family's dire fortunes."

Earlier I spoke of "elephants in the room." Contraception? Well, I am sure that I am not the only Herald reader who accepts that there are convincing arguments that say it must be part of the mix, despite the Holy See's consistent line on that 1968 encyclical. But a reluctant concession of this kind is a far cry from the panacea advocated by those who think all we need to do is parachute in sacks of condoms and oestrogen pills and all will be well. The thinking behind such a simplistic approach is reductivist and shallow and does scant justice to the dignity of human communities.

So much for the so-called south. What of the north? Until relatively recently there was a stage when birthrates in a country in Britain got so low that genuine fears were being voiced about future demographic patterns and whether shrinking numbers of labourers would be able to sustain an ageing society of elderly members. Recent spurts in the birth rates have all but allayed such worries. Britain looks set to modestly increase its numbers in the decades ahead from a present figure of around 60 million to 71 million by 2030. This need not be cause for alarm bells, but so long as we begin to tread more lightly on the gift that is God's creation. In short, it strikes me that we have a huge responsibility for leadership.

Reining in our excessive consumption is essential for two reasons; first in the fight against runaway climate change, but secondly we have to radically alter what appears "in the shop window."

Developing economies that hanker after gas-guzzling cars, limitless possessions and a materialism bordering on hedonism will end up condemning their citizens to a spiritual emptiness that threatens to play havoc with the planet's increasingly frail state. Cafod's *live simply* campaign hits the nail on the head in this respect. Part of a new contract between us and the emerging economies ought to be the transfer of low-carbon technologies that allows such countries to harness renewable energy without adding hugely to the stock of greenhouse gas emissions. It's simply a matter of justice. What we have (perhaps unwittingly for long periods) damaged, we must put right.

Is there a simple prophetic way in which Christians in the west can make an impact? I end with a story and a challenging thought. Some weeks ago I gave a talk in Ealing Abbey to around 60 or so west Londoners. At the end of my 45 minute address, out of the stalls with the first question was a rather vexed looking woman in the front row.

"You said nothing about eating meat," she cried. I knew what was coming. Livestock farming and its practices account for nearly one-fifth of all the carbon dioxide emitted around the globe every year. It isn't just flatulent cows; it's the huge quantities of fertiliser taken to grow the grain that finds its way into animal feed. There's a direct link too between deforestation and carnivorous eating habits. Massive swathes of the Amazon are being cleared to grow soya to export to America and Europe for animal feed. This is not sentimental "Bambi theology"; it's a hard-nosed assessment of what we are doing to our world. According to the US Department of Agriculture, modern food consumes roughly 10 calories of fossil fuel energy for every calorie of food energy produced. Farm an acre of decent land and you can produce only 20 lbs of beef protein from it, but farm the same acre by producing wheat and you'll get 138 lbs of protein. And use a fraction of the water in the process.

Catholic vegetarians? Has this man lost his mind? Well no actually. **I am reflecting a development gaining more and more ground among religious ethicists who speak out loudly in favour of an "eschatological vegetarianism"**. Such voices quote biblical precedent in early Genesis: "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth and every tree-bearing fruit which yields seed they shall be yours for food." This is the pre-lapsarian account of the world, a world without predation and one in which, as Isaiah goes on to speak of, a world in which "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox". It is only after the Flood that nature, red in tooth and claw, transforms us into flesh-eating mammals.

Chinese annual meat consumption per capita has risen from 9 lbs in 1968 to 120 lbs today. Eating meat is seen as aspirational, but if human numbers are to grow at such a steep rate and if we are going to avoid the worst excesses of climate change, something will have to give.

Shunning meat and relying less on animals for masses of dairy produce might be one way in the long term, of exercising restraint and making sure that human stomachs are full without precipitating irreversible damage to the biosphere.

*Mark Dowd is a journalist and broadcaster and campaign strategist of Operation Noah
(www.operationnoah.org)*

3rd October 2008 * When Christians stopped caring about animals *

*Britons are treating pets with ever more callousness, says **Claire Barnes**, but don't expect to hear any condemnation from Church leaders*

Just this summer the RSCA released animal cruelty figures for last year that suggest that, despite the Animal Welfare Act coming into force, animal abuse continues to rise. The number of people convicted for animal cruelty rose by 24 per cent and among some of the severest cases of cruelty was that of a collie stabbed and tortured along with a cat that was kicked to death for having muddy paws. While the RSPCA is labeling these figures "a result of a throwaway society" we, the Christian community, are left wondering where the Church really stands on the issue of man's relationship with and duty to our furry friends.

Just last year Joe Carter posted on the website: Evangelicaloutpost.com this thought-provoking question; "How did we [Christians] lose status as stewards of creation?" He went on to say that, in his opinion, if a poll were to be taken to see which group had the most care for the welfare of animals, Catholics and other Christians would rank at the bottom. His comments highlight an important issue: that being the perceived reluctance of the Christian community to take any real stand on the issue of animal welfare,

I spoke to Deborah Jones, general secretary of Catholic Concern for Animals, who said: "I'm afraid to say that the Church takes no real position on animal welfare. "I would say that the churches, in the UK at least, are for rather than against animal welfare, but take no active part in promoting it."

The Church may have fallen silent on the issue of animal welfare but the Bible has more than enough to say about the well-being of God's creatures. In fact, although the consumption of meat was later permitted, it seems that God's initial intention was for man and animal to co-exist and for man to eat a vegetarian diet. Genesis 1:29 says: "And God said behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat,"

Even after the Fall the Prophet Isaiah foresaw a time when we would go back to a peaceful coexistence with all the creatures of the Earth. Isaiah 11:6 says: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." God goes on to forbid the ill-treatment of animals in Deuteronomy and even talks about animals sharing the Sabbath as a day of rest in the book of Exodus. So if the Bible has so much guidance for the modern-day Church on this important topic why are we reluctant to step out? Maybe part of the reason why the Church is reluctant to promote its views on the subject is the fear of being aligned with radical animal welfare organisations, which are largely atheistically inspired movements, coupled with a fear of creating further divisions within an already fractured Church. In an interview given before he became Pontiff, Cardinal Ratzinger hinted at this fear. He said: "There is a remarkable ordering of matters in the Holy Scripture. We can read how, at first, only plants are mentioned as providing food for man. Only after the flood, that is to say, after a new breach has been opened between God and man, are we told that man eats flesh... Nonetheless... we should not proceed from this to any kind of sectarian cult of animals."

The Bible encourages us to consider the welfare of animals. Proverbs 12:10 says: "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," We may well wonder what "regardeth" can really mean in our day-to-day lives and how this regard can help bring about a brighter future for the animals in this country? Deborah Jones gave this advice: "We could think before we buy pets: 'Will we provide them with company all day?' We could ask ourselves: 'Are they pack or herd animals condemned to live in solitude? Are they from shelters or bred for pedigree specifications?' We could also think before we buy food: 'Do we need to eat meat? If we do is it humanely produced? Do we need leather? Do we need animals to be abused in laboratories when there are other means of testing drugs? Can we employ more animal inspectors and treat abusers more severely?' That sort of thing."

Catholics may decide to offer their support to Catholic Concern for Animals which is an organisation that raises awareness of the authentic, pro-animal, Christian tradition through education and research. You can e-mail the society at cca@catholic-animals.org to become a member. In Job 38:41 God says that He hears the cries of newborn ravens crying to Him for food. Jesus went on to say in the Gospel according to St Matthew that God supplies food for the wild birds and that not one of them falls to the ground without Him knowing.

The Bible is clearly telling us that God hears the cries of the creatures He has made so perhaps it's time for us to hear them also and to once again take up our position as the true stewards of creation. #

3rd October 2008 St Francis of Assisi (October 4)

The conversion of St Francis (1182-1226) seemed at first to make an intolerable prig of him. He had been a fine and generous youth, drunk on ideals of chivalry and dreams of martial glory.

The change in him began when, after being taken prisoner and suffering a serious illness, he began to apprehend that he was called to a wholly different form of heroism. Eager now for the service of God, he heard voices instructing him to repair the church of San Damiano in Assisi.

Did not Dr Johnson observe, in his stolid, sensible, Anglo-Saxon way, that religious enthusiasm may amount to no more than "a vain belief in private revelation"? Such, it seemed, was the case with Francis.

Overwhelmed with zeal, he stole from his rich merchant father Pietro Bernardone, and presented the money for the restoration of San Damiano. Quite rightly, the priest refused the pilfered offering.

Fearful of his father's justified wrath, Francis hid for a month in a pit. Eventually, though, Pietro Bernardone found him, beat him up and imprisoned him in a cellar. When the prodigal proved unrepentant, Pietro began legal proceedings to recover the money and have his son banished from Assisi. This was vindictive, certainly, but Francis's reply to the court's summons added impudence to theft. "Your letter does not concern me," he returned. "By the grace of God I have been freed of the power of the consuls, having become a servant of the Most High." Translated out of religious fervour, this meant that Francis, having attached himself to St Damiano, escaped the jurisdiction of the civil courts.

His father now pursued his claim through the diocesan court. "If you wish to serve God," the bishop told Francis, "you must first give back the money to your father." Francis reacted by stripping naked in court, publicly renouncing his father, and returning not merely the money but his clothes. He then departed, clad in a tunic belonging to one of the bishop's farmhands.

In pious accounts this behaviour is presented as a formal rejection of the world. The world, however, might very well retort that Francis had been guilty of a ghastly display of exhibitionism to humiliate the father whom he had wronged.

This proves no more than that great saints are not made overnight, and that the most unpromising beginnings may result in glorious ends. Francis's pigheadedness and self-righteousness would very soon be transformed into the utmost humility and simplicity.

The moral prig became *le jongleur de Dieu*, through sheer loveliness the creator of the Franciscan Order. That stern and terrifying injunction - "Take up thy cross and follow me" - was revealed as the true source of joy and liberation.

All the same, one can still feel sorry for Pietro Bernardone.

#

17th October 2008

What's so special about man?

Quentin de la Bedoyere speaks to Peter Singer, the Princeton philosopher reviled by Catholics for his controversial views on human and animal rights

So the Spanish government is almost certain to grant allegedly human rights to the great apes (as reported in *The Catholic Herald* on August 8). I read this with mixed feelings; like many readers, I am strongly opposed to cruelty towards animals but that is a long distance from suggesting that we should recognise that they have rights. So I went to the fountainhead: Peter Singer, who - among other academic appointments - is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. He is regarded as the intellectual champion of the cause.

Professor Singer is a distinguished philosopher with a particular interest in ethics. But his views are seen by many as extreme. He has been nicknamed Professor Death; he has been attacked in Germany as having eugenic views akin to Nazism; Simon Wiesenthal the Nazi-hunter has been strongly critical; a prominent economist suspended his donations to Princeton when Singer was appointed; there have been loud outcries from organisations devoted to the care of the disabled.

A little imp in me suggests that such a chorus of indignation only musters when their target has something of threatening substance to say. And Singer wrote in 1995: "I sometimes think that (the Pope) and I at least share the virtue of seeing clearly what is at stake."

The Catholic Herald prefers to reserve its indignation until it has listened to what a philosopher actually has to say, and then to make a reflective judgment of the points with which we, or more particularly our readers, agree or disagree. I must thank him for his cooperation in entering into dialogue with us.

Professor Singer described himself to me as a preference utilitarian. That is, he holds that the criterion for a moral choice is the best way of balancing the needs, or interests, of the parties affected by a decision. But the parties, he insisted, include all sentient beings. Singer argued that suffering is suffering no matter what sentient creature is involved. To think otherwise, he claimed, is to discriminate on the grounds of species — a characteristic which is no more relevant to moral decision than, for instance, colour or sexual orientation.

I asked how he could hold that all species should be treated identically. "To be sure, the species differ in their characteristics and therefore in the degree of suffering they may endure. The rights, which is a popular but potentially misleading term, of non-human animals can't by definition be human rights; so moral judgments will vary from species to species according to their natures, and the circumstances of the decision." He clarified this for me with an example. "Should we have to choose between rescuing a mouse or a human being from death, we would - other things being equal - give preference to a human being. When it comes to a question of taking life, or allowing life to end, it matters whether a being is one who can see that he or she actually has a life - that is, can see that he or she is the same being who exists now, who existed in the past, and who will exist in the future. Such a being has more to lose than a being incapable of understanding this."

But, and it was a significant point: "If, for example, the human being had suffered brain damage so severe as to be in an irreversible state of unconsciousness, then it might not be better to save the human."

The uncompromising application of the criterion of suffering had already led us into controversial territory. I felt this took us further. His principle, it seemed, must lead to the human foetus, before the stage when it is capable of feeling, having no special status. He concurred firmly. "And even when its capacity for suffering is developed, this will be long before it has a sense of its continuance of existence, and so no claim can be made on the basis of that either. The mature ape will have greater awareness than the new-born baby and so merits preferable consideration. Though the pain that may be caused to relatives should be taken into account, of course. The same could be said of any human being who lacks awareness through mental defect." I instanced the objections made about this view by so many people of substance and concern. But he did not resile.

"I think that every sentient being is entitled to equal consideration of his or her interests. The joys and the pains of intellectually disabled people should be given equal weight with the similar joys and pains of everyone else - and here 'everyone' includes both you and me, and non-human animals. I don't think that is devaluing the intellectually disabled.

"On the other hand, just as I think it is less wrong to kill a dog, say, than a normal human being (because the dog has less awareness of its existence over time, and so has less of an interest in continuing to live) so I think humans who don't have awareness of their interest over time have less of an interest in continuing to live. I'm open to other arguments, but it isn't easy to see what can justify us in granting a more serious right to life to a severely intellectually disabled human than we give to a non-human animal at a similar, or even superior, mental level."

How about the use of non-human animals for medical research? He thinks that much more effort should be put into other methods which involve less or no suffering but he would not necessarily exclude this if the balance were right. "A good test would be whether experimenters who use animals would be prepared to carry out their experiments on human beings at a similar mental level - say, those born with irreversible brain damage."

I put it to him that he is often quoted by militant animal liberationists. But he told me that he had no sympathy with this. "They do harm to the cause. Animal Liberation can only achieve its objectives by winning the moral argument and persuading the public at large that it is right. Harassing people is not the way to do that."

The concept of the sacrosanctity of human life, as Catholics would see it, is derived from a belief system which Singer rejects. It can only be translated as a special status given to the human being, at any stage in its life or mental competence, because it belongs to a particular species. So I asked him how he saw the Catholic view that humans have an obligation towards animals as God's creatures, and that cruelty is not only a defiance of God but a corruption of the individual who chooses to inflict pain. It comes, he told me, very close to his objectives - although the basis differs.

So what are we to make of Professor Singer? At the very least we cannot question his sincerity. His views have been well and consistently worked out and he has maintained them against manifold attacks over the years. And even if we disagree, perhaps strongly, with his basic criterion and where it can lead, I think that many of us would share some of his key objectives. I am left with a comment from my daughter, a zoologist who has written much about the great apes: "I'm not worried about the philosophy, but if giving them formal rights means that they are protected from cruelty and enabled to prosper, then I am all for them."

www.secondsightblog.com

14th November 2008

Manning's protest

From Dr Deborah Jones, general secretary of Catholic Concern for Animals

SIR - Robert Gray's article on Cardinal Manning (November 7) was much appreciated by Catholic Concern for Animals. There is a wonderful Good Friday sermon preached by Newman, in which he declared that "there is something so very dreadful, so Satanic in tormenting [animals] who have never harmed us", and asked: "Now what is it that moves our very hearts and sickens us so much as cruelty shown to poor animals?"

However, that was 1842, before he became a Catholic. So far as I know, he said nothing further on the subject after that time. But, Cardinal Manning served the cause of suffering animals just as vigorously as he did that of people. From its foundation in 1876 till 1891, he was vice-president of the Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection (now known as the National Anti-Vivisection Society).

Among his many speeches condemning the use of animals in experiments was one at a meeting at the house of Lord Shaftesbury in 1882: "This I do protest, that there is not a religious instinct in nature ...nor is there a word in revelation, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, nor is there to be found in the great theology which I do represent, nor in any Act of the Church of which I am a member: nor in the lives and utterances of any one of those great servants of that Church who stand as examples, nor is there an authoritative utterance anywhere to be found in favour of vivisection. What is to be the end of such practice? To me than this nothing more terrible can be conceived."

Oh, Cardinal Manning - how we need you today.

Yours faithfully,

DEBORAH JONES *By e-mail*

21st November 2008

Rising to the challenge of Peter Singer

*Last month **Quentin de la Bedoyere** presented the controversial views of the leading secular ethicist. Here, he summarises your responses*

What do we make of Peter Singer? On October 17 I summarised for you the views of Professor Singer. He is famous, or notorious, as the influential, intellectual champion for animal rights. In essence he holds that we should treat all sentient animals in the same way irrespective of their species. We should be concerned to get the right balance between the interests of all animals in terms of their capacity for suffering and their ability to understand that they have identities as beings who have a past, a present and a future. If you haven't kept a copy, you can read my full article in the archive of our Internet edition at www.secondsightblog.com (which records many readers' comments).

Singer's principles lead to a number of conclusions. Perhaps the most dramatic is that non-human animals may well take precedence over human beings in matters of life, death and suffering if, by reason of the human's immaturity or lack of mental capacity, the non-human animal has superior preferences. This might, for example, occur when a mature ape is compared to a newborn baby.

Many readers came back generously to express their views on Singer. There was not a single "Disgusted of Westminster Cathedral" but there was plenty of well-thought-out critique, which often included a sympathy for aspects of Singer's views. So much for those who imagine that we froth at the mouth whenever we read of someone who speaks against Catholic principles.

I begin my summary of your views with a reader's remark that goes to the heart of the matter. If you start with a mistaken principle, and follow it to its logical conclusion, you are likely to end with mistaken results. In Catholic terms, of course, we regard human beings, at any state or stage of life, as inherently superior to non-human animals by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God, and created for an eternal destiny.

In secular terms we would speak of the human's moral nature, founded in the capacity to recognise good and evil, and, through free will, to make moral choices. We are not just the highest species, we are qualitatively different in our spiritual capacities - which we cannot detect through a microscope but of whose existence we are all aware.

But, while the secular view may be generally true, Singer would counter that in fact we are not aware of our moral status from conception until at least some point in early childhood, or may not have that awareness through severe mental disorder. He is quoted as saying; "A period of 28 days after birth might be allowed before an infant is accepted as having the same right to live as others."

Here a reader made the point that to base a moral decision on awareness at any given point in time is simply gratuitous. We must consider the fact that any human being is by nature ordered to have or to develop this spiritual awareness. This potentiality gives it an intrinsic interest which extends far beyond the present moment. Such an interest will always sharply differentiate it from the non-human animal.

This was reinforced by a reader musing on the fact that many, both religious and secular, regard the care of the planet for the welfare of our remote descendants as a high moral value. It would be irrational to treat our descendants who are already conceived at a lower currency. This argument has a much wider reach in our society than Singer's views alone.

There was also good discussion on rights and duties. It was noticed that we do not hold that non-human animals have duties, and it therefore follows that they do not have rights. But this argument was nuanced by an assertion that animals do have rights — at least in the sense that we are obliged to treat them as part of God's creation, for which we are required to care. They may in fact be God's rights, enjoyed by animals by proxy, which we should be regarding. This seemed to me a valuable insight.

There is a link between our treatment of animals and our treatment of human beings, one reader argued. Our willingness to degrade non-human animals makes it easier for us, psychologically, to degrade human beings. In fact, readers were harsher than Singer himself in criticising Catholic practice, if not principles, in the treatment of animals. We have, they claimed, much further to go in our care and respect for God's creatures. The point is well taken.

As a postscript, this month the EU Commission proposed that no experiments should be conducted on the higher apes, and that we should review and reduce experiments on other animals.

Singer was criticised by a reader for failing to review his intellectual premise when it led to absurd conclusions. This was illustrated for us by the occasion when he went to great expense to care for his mother when she was so deep into Alzheimer's disease that, by his principles, she no longer constituted a person. "Perhaps it is more difficult than I thought before, because it is different when it's your mother," he said. That seems to be the nub of the matter. Our natural, universal and historical sense that human beings are by their nature unique is not a mere anthropocentric triumphalism. It runs so deep in our mental grasp that we have to go to extreme lengths of ingenious argument to dehumanise a category of person before we can contemplate its destruction. Singer demonstrates that this reduction is not solely the province of the patently evil but can also be achieved by a thoughtful man of basic goodwill.

Forgive my very general summary of some 30 pages of comments. If you would like to express a new or stronger argument (for or against) do use www.secondsightblog.com where you will be able to read the many comments already made.

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The Tablet

18th October 2008

Let us bray

Given that it was World Animal Day, perhaps parishioners at St. Peter's in the Austrian town of Linz shouldn't have been surprised at the unusual church attendance. Eighty animals in the pews on 4th October were joined in spirit by 550 animals from all over the world, which received their blessing by email. "We were certainly the hub of the animal world today," Fr. Franz Zeiger told the *Oberosterreichische Nachrichten* ("Upper Austrian News") after Mass. "This year, the blessings were of truly biblical proportions."

As soon as word got round that Fr. Zeiger was prepared to bless animals by email, he was flooded with requests from owners sending photos of their pets. Some of the background stories were very sad, Fr. Zeiger said, like the woman who lost her entire family in an accident and was alone except for her two cats.

All emails and photos were pinned onto a long white board on one of the walls of the Church and Fr. Zeiger strode along the wall blessing each one during Mass. Most of the animals physically present in Church were cats, dogs and birds, but Fr. Zeiger also received email requests for blessings of snakes, fish, turtles, horses, pigs and even a scorpion. #

3rd January 2009

* Green thoughts in a greener Church *

Ellen Teague

Many people are looking for ways to incorporate their concern for the planet into their Christian faith. Scripture, theology and mystical writings can all help develop our concept Creation, and inspire the search for practical ways to care for it

A young journalist with a local paper once interviewed me, asking why I was campaigning against the nuclear-waste train movements near where I live. I told her about my involvement in my parish Justice and Peace group. She was amazed; she didn't think people were still going to church and, despite her interest in these environmental issues, she said she had never come across any church connection.

That conversation took place in the mid-1980s. At the time, I was campaign coordinator of Cafod's Renewing the Earth campaign, an educational programme examining the links between development, environment (or God's Creation) and faith. A group of about a dozen people from my parish followed a six-week programme that was produced as part of that campaign.

We had lively discussions about the natural world and we discovered Catholic mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, and Creation-centred theologians of our own time such as Thomas Berry and Sean McDonagh. After following this programme, our group joined a local Friends of the Earth and started lobbying for local recycling facilities.

Things have changed a lot since the mid-1980s. A Baptist church near where I live is installing ground-source heating and water-efficient toilets and there was a recent article on this page about an Anglican parish in Edmonton installing solar panels to produce their electricity. A Catholic parish in Barnet has engaged an eco-architect to draw up a feasibility study to become a flagship eco-church; the project is called "Building the Future". These are good examples of what can be done; but only a handful of parishes are embracing environmental justice issues - despite the fantastic efforts of initiatives such as Eco-congregation, Christian Ecology Link, Cafod's climate campaign and Sound of Many Waters, which are there to develop a broader sense of Christian mission.

Indeed, "The Call of Creation", a document which came out of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in 2002 expressed their wish to add their voice to the many calling for urgent action to protect our earthly home - but this document is not widely known in parishes. In it, they say that a way of life that disregards and damages God's Creation, forces the poor into greater poverty, and threatens the right of future generations to a healthy environment and to their fair share of the earth's wealth and resources, is contrary to the vision of the Gospel.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church says that it recognises and respects the "autonomy of earthly affairs" in all these disciplines; it also says that the Church's task is to "read the signs of the times" and uncover the spiritual and moral issues that lie at the root of the challenges of our time.

The media today report on how our financial systems and our earth systems, are on the verge of collapse and Christians need to find ways to explore the relationship between our faith and our concern for the world. There is a power in people working together and I think we need to help communities to do just that; building a sustainable future has never been more important.

More than a year ago, I was approached by Operation Noah, a group of committed Christians from across Britain. They wanted a study guide on climate change based on Catholic social teaching. People tend to learn and understand better when they meet in small groups over a period of time - and this guide recommends groups of between eight and 10 people. The guide, called *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: a study guide*

on climate change and the Church's social teaching, offers materials for study by adult groups to help them examine the causes and impacts of climate change and to gain insights from Scripture as well as suggesting actions based upon Christian respect for the Earth's natural system. Climate change is an entry point into the whole of the ecological crisis facing human society and the guide covers related issues as well as responses already being made by Christians. It suggests ways of living more sustainably, and urges Christians to play a leadership role in helping society and government face up to this crisis.

My ecumenical guide on Churches and the environment '*Paint the Church Green*', is geared towards church groups of all Christian traditions - particularly comprising adults. It helps people explore the relationship between their Christian faith and concern for the natural world. Learning about environmental issues, unsustainable development and the link with global poverty goes alongside reflection on Western lifestyle and positive suggestion for change. Parish groups can work out their carbon footprints and are encouraged to discover new ideas, such as planting a tree to commemorate baptisms in the parish or celebrating "Creationtide" between 1 September and mid-October - something promoted in the European Churches Environmental Network. Their website (www.ecen.org) has an anthology of environmental worship material that parishes might use in their liturgies.

Ethical investment is a growing area; we are experiencing financial turmoil unparalleled in our time. The guide suggests that people consider using their money to nudge companies towards accepting better human and animal rights and environmental standards. If I were writing the book today, I would be prompting participants to reflect on corporate greed and the wider problem of values in society which have caused the financial crash we are experiencing.

• **Ellen Teague** is a freelance journalist. *Between the Flood and the Rainbow* is published by Operation Noah and available through www.operationnoah.org. *Paint the Church Green* is available through www.kevinmayhew.com

Daily Mail

1st December 2008

Question - Is there any evidence that Jesus Christ was vegetarian?

Contrary to the earlier answer, evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls for Jesus Christ's vegetarianism is largely circumstantial, but nonetheless, compelling. Dr. Hugh Schonfield, writing in '*The Passover Plot*' - to my mind the most rigorous and demythologised life of Jesus ever written - asserts that Jesus belonged to a strict vegetarian branch of the Essenes in northern Judea - the Nazoreans.

Schonfield writes: "The name borne by the earliest followers of Jesus wasn't Christians but Nazoreans, and Jesus himself was known as 'the Nazorean'. That Nazoreans were vegetarian is well attested. The old Nazoreans, like the Samaritans, were opposed to the Judean traditions, holding that the Southerners had falsified the Law of Moses. They were vegetarians and rejected animal sacrifices, but practised circumcision and observed the Jewish Sabbath and festivals. According to ancient sources Jesus's Nazorean-vegetarian way of life might have been a family legacy. Tradition has it that his brother James was raised by their mother Miriam (Mary) as a Nazorean vegetarian.

Shirley de-Groome,
Wisbech,
Cams.

Church of England Newspaper

19th September 2008

**** Our Gospel duty to care for animals ****

By Richard Llewellyn



For me, it all really began when I was working in the Diocese of Canterbury and had been asked to preach at an annual Pet Service at a church in Dover. Someone living in Canterbury came to see me — she had heard about my preaching engagement — and very politely asked me what I would be preaching about; and wondered if I knew what was going on in Dover docks at that time: the regular shipments of young calves for the veal market in France and other continental countries.

She described to me the sufferings of these animals not only during transit, but also during the fattening-up process before they were slaughtered. "Why not come down to the docks and see for yourself?" she said. And so I did.

I became quickly convinced that it was absolutely wrong to ship these young calves abroad in such claustrophobic conditions, often transported without food and water for hours on end, and enduring dreadful conditions for several days until the journey was over. Those that were left alive, and not all of them would be, then had to suffer further ill-treatment - being artificially fattened up in confined veal crates — in order to produce the white veal meat so favoured by the French and other continentals.

The sermon at that Pet Service was very different from what it would have been without Audrey Eyton's timely intervention. And since then, one thing has led to another: I became involved in the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals, and then its Chairman.

One good thing the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals has been able to achieve is to encourage parishes up and down the country to observe each year Animal Welfare Sunday. It is always the Sunday nearest the feast day of St Francis of Assisi — October 4. Lots of parishes do now observe this Sunday, but it is still the case that in our Church the welfare of animals is not regularly thought about or prayed for.

Each year our Society focuses on a different aspect of what should be our continuing concern for the animal kingdom. This year we are on about battery hens and broiler chickens.

You may have seen on the television some of the programmes presented by Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fernley-Whittingstall about the way that most of the eggs that we buy are still produced — chickens cooped up in tiny wire cages, hardly able to turn around, let alone to flap their wings and move about and peck at the soil.

You will also have seen pictures of vast covered buildings crowded with hens being fattened for the market, with no more room for each one of them than an A4 sheet of paper; the weaker ones being trodden on, and many of them standing in their own mess. Whether you are a battery hen or a broiler chicken, your life is unnatural, snort, miserable and brutalised.

I am sure you will agree that it is absolutely appropriate for the Church to speak out about this issue following the high-impact campaign against cruel intensive poultry systems so clearly presented to us by the two celebrity chefs during the past year.

No doubt there are still plenty of people who wonder what all the fuss is about. But just consider the scale of suffering involved. Nine out of 10 of all farm animals are meat chickens, and 95 per cent of these (more than 800 million birds each year) are reared in inhumane conditions.

"But people need cheap meat." This argument used to defend cruel intensive systems is at odds with the current epidemic of obesity causing the government and our doctors such concern. A quick glance down any High Street swiftly confirms that our major nutritional problems stem more from "too much" than "too little". As a food historian wrote in *The Times* recently: "The era of cheap eating has been a disaster for the world. People in the rich world have eaten too much food, fattening themselves into obesity and sickness".

When bombs rained down on this country, and war-time rationing drove us to depend mainly on vegetables, we were eating less meat and other animal produce in a week than most of us now eat in a day, and the nation was considerably healthier than it has ever been since.

So we as Christians have every good reason to keep on speaking out against intensive farming systems which frustrate many of the God-given needs of creatures we eat, contribute to our own ill-health, and subject them to nothing but misery from birth to death. And as individual Christians we all need to take personal responsibility for the stewardship of creation by supporting the more humane free-range rearing systems.

I very much doubt that any Christian person would deliberately treat their own pet with cruelty or neglect. But I suspect that many of us are still guilty of "buying into cruelty", as comedian Ricky Gervais put it, by failing to give sufficient thought to the lives of the animals which end up on our plates. The Bible tells us that God does not forget a single spar-row. Surely we can't imagine he overlooks the plight of, say, 50,000 suffering birds packed into a stinking shed, or the pathetic creatures crammed into battery cages?

You don't have to be an expert on intensive agriculture to know that it must be wrong to cram egg-laying hens tightly together in cages in which they can hardly move; to breed chickens to out-grow painfully their own skeletons.

It cannot be right to rear such highly intelligent animals as pigs in totally barren environments, on metal slats between concrete walls.

It is wrong to transport young calves in crammed conditions over long distances and then force-feed the survivors on a milk diet so that when they are slaughtered their flesh is milky white. To do these things is to inflict pro-longed suffering on creatures that, it has become clear, have many feelings just like our own.

To frustrate the natural God-given instincts of huge numbers of farm animals in order to produce foods we do not need, but like to eat, cannot be kind. And it certainly isn't Christian.

There are, of course, those in the farming industry, perhaps best typified by the organic farmers, who would like to see the development of systems much more sympathetic to the needs of both farm and wild animals. But, there are powerful industrial forces opposed to such ideas. We, as consumers, have a major role to play in deciding the outcome. And, as Christian consumers, I believe we also have a God-given duty.

The creatures we are talking about are voiceless and helpless. We are not. We have pens with which to write to politicians and retailers, voices with which to speak out, shopping choices that can have a major impact on the outcome of the debate, organisations we can join, even, on appropriate occasions, banners we can carry.

The main scriptural principle regarding the purpose of animals is that, like us; they are made by God to express his love, creativity, and for his delight. The Bible tells us that God's creatures praise him. And they do this simply by being what they are. The animals, the birds, and the fish in the seas, are not there principally for us, but for themselves and for God who made them.

A false, but still sadly too common, understanding expressed even today by some Christians is that because humans are given "dominion" over other creatures in Genesis 1, this means that we can do as we like with the animals under our authority. The actual meaning of "dominion", in the Hebrew, is the rule of a righteous ruler.

It is significant that the verse starts "Let us make man in our own image and let him rule..." Our style of ruling should reflect God's way of ruling, since we are made in his image. God's rule is righteous, just and compassionate' so should ours be, whether we are President Mugabe of Zimbabwe or a humble chicken farmer.

So what can we do as Christians? First, we can find out what is really going on. Compassion in World Farming is a marvellous organisation, and has a first-class website. We could even join the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals.

And there are lots of ways in which we can be a voice for the voiceless.

For a start, let us look at our own lifestyles and ask ourselves how we could change in ways that really would mean that we are taking our responsibility for the care of the animal kingdom more seriously and more compassionately.

The Rt Revd Richard Llewellyn is former Bishop at Lambeth and Chairman of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

10th October 2008 * Bishop: 'Free-range' is a biblical term *

By Matt Cresswell

FARMING HENS in battery cages is a potent symbol of humankind's broken relationship with its fellow creatures, the Bishop of Rochester has said. Preaching in Rochester Cathedral at an ecumenical service organised by the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals on Saturday, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali said that "things are not as they should be".

Speaking on Isaiah 11 he told the 250-strong congregation that whenever justice is mentioned in the Bible it refers to animals as well as humans. He added that freeing animals was a biblical principle and that the term "free-range" originally came from the Bible. As he spoke he was flanked by two battery hen cages containing prayer cards which were later distributed to the congregation.

The Dean of Rochester, the Very Rev Adrian Newman, spoke on the same theme and said that it was a sad indictment that celebrity chefs were the ones raising awareness to the appalling conditions in which battery hens are raised.

The event was also supported by Animal Aid, the Battery Hen Welfare Trust, the Last Chance Animal Rescue Centre in Evenbridge and Folly Wildlife Rescue in Tunbridge Wells. Bishop Nazir-Ali also blessed a small tortoise called 'Nettle' brought to the service in a shoe box . #

Church Times

19th September 2008

Letter from John Wainwright

Sir,— I suspect many preachers and congregations will be unaware that the first Sunday in October is Animal Welfare Sunday. This is the, traditional date, being the nearest Sunday to the feast of St Francis of Assisi, who is renowned for the breadth of his theology on creation.

When we have a government that has reneged on its promise to reduce animal experiments in favour of alternative research, and a Conservative Party threatening to bring back hunting with dogs, including hare coursing, congregations need to be reminded of our Christian calling to promote compassionate stewardship of creation and to challenge cruel exploitation of it.

But it is not only misguided politicians whom we should be confronting. Sadly, in spite of St Francis, the low view given to animals by people such as Thomas Aquinas still pervades sections of the Church today, including support for hunting and factory farming and, at its worst in southern Europe continuing indifference to bull fighting.

Even some so-called Evangelicals in America seemed to regard it as a point in her favour that Sarah Palin, the Republican candidate for Vice- President, enjoys blood sports. It is shameful that for too long Christians have left campaigning on animal welfare issues to Buddhists, New Angers, and other faith groups.

If, however, preachers are prepared to accept the challenge, may I recommend some excellent worship material produced by the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals. They maybe contacted at: www.aswa.org.uk, or phone 01252-843093.

John Wainwright, 48 Borough Way, Potters Bar, Herts , EN6 3HB

If and when published unknown Reply from Don Gwillim

Sir, May I congratulate John Wainwright for his excellent letter (19th Sept). The indifference of the church to animal cruelty is shameful and seriously questions it's credibility. I cannot imagine a 'God of love' approving humanity's massive abuse of God's creatures. As the future of humankind becomes increasingly precarious, will God grant mercy to those who have shown no mercy towards his animals and indifference towards the destruction of his creation? The Bible relates that God promised never to flood the earth again, but the Bible does not contain a promise that God will spare humanity from the consequences of it's own actions.

In God's eyes, we are just another species but a species to whom God has given a great responsibility. However: this does not mean that we are the owners or masters of the planet. God has made us in "His Image" to enable us to care for His creation with love and compassion, to be like His son; servant kings of creation, not tyrants. Surely, our future depends much more on a God-righteous relationship with the earth rather than enforcing our self-righteous claim to be masters of God's creation.

Don Gwillim, CVAUK, Foresta, Pines Road, Liphook, GU30 7PL

10th October 2008

Bless this tortoise

IT WAS NOT meant to be an animal-blessing service of the sort that brings all the children with their pets. When the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) holds its annual ecumenical service, usually in a cathedral, it chooses a serious theme for the occasion: last year it was the fur trade; this year it was battery-egg production.

Preaching in Rochester Cathedral, the Bishop, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, said that battery cages, in which hens are "held captive", were a symbol of what had gone wrong in our relationship with our fellow creatures. Things are not as they should be;" he said. The freeing of animals was a biblical principle, and the term "free-range" came directly from the Bible.

The Dean of Rochester, the Very Revd Adrian Newman, picked up the theme. He said it was a sad indictment that it had taken celebrity chefs to bring the public's attention to the way birds were farmed.

During the service, which had been put together by the Revd Hugh Broadbent, the Vicar of St John's, Bromley, two battery cages ("well cleaned-up"; says Samantha Chandler of ASWA) were at the front of the congregation, and people were invited to come and collect egg-shaped cards printed with a prayer written by Mr Broadbent.

It was all slightly over the head of one small boy who had brought his pet tortoise, Nettle, expecting quite a different sort of service. But Dr Nair-Ali spotted him in the congregation, and went to give Nettle the blessing the boy was hoping for.

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Green Christian (CEL)

Is the CVAUK leafleting ("Meat - Blessing or a Curse?") at CEL services and Climate Change marches over the past two years, having an effect? - Ed

Summer 2008 Issue 65

Having been a supporter of CEL virtually from its inception and with the increasingly dire news of our impact on God's amazing planet I pray that the CEL Storm of Hope theme is gaining wide Christian support and momentum. It is gratifying to know that so many dedicated groups and people are doing so much for environmental issues.

One less positive aspect of this has been troubling me for some time in respect of CEL and I know that I am not alone. Myself along with others are at a loss as to why CEL doesn't stress the vital importance of veg(etari)anism in alleviating suffering both to humankind and sentient animals which God too created.

However I did notice that vegan was mentioned once in the last Green Christian magazine on page 8 which commenced "Mainstream solutions to climate change are no solution at all..." how true. On page 11 LOAF mentions "Animal-friendly" but I never understand what CEL means by that. I suspect it doesn't mean go vegan? If CEL condones killing & exploiting animals then that is hardly being friendly. Chris Walton quotes to live or die for and goes on to list about connection with all creation, all living and non-living things. Then on page 16 it states "We commit ourselves to live simply that others may simply live; respect and celebrate God's creation in nature...". Fine words indeed but is CEL prepared to condemn the unethical; unhealthy; unnatural; unsustainable and unnecessary meat and dairy industry? Conversely I have seen little evidence that CEL is strongly and actively promoting veg(etari)anism as one of the central planks in living more simply.

The renowned Christian animal theologian The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey has an excellent web site www.oxfordanimaethics.com that CEL supporters may care to refer to.

Being saved by grace through faith, not by works (Dave Bookless page 15) is no help or spiritual consolation to those dying of starvation or lack of drinking water in the developing world whilst many of us in the West die of animal-related diseases. I would be very interested to hear other CEL supporters' comments on this subject.

Bill Palethorpe

The last issue of Green Christian has taken much time in reading and re-reading. I am only able to keep going with the knowledge that there are some Christians in the country who feel as I do and am inspired to keep trying, even though I – like John Mead – live in a part of the country where Christian leaders and congregations are on the whole in denial. The Sustainability Framework by Catherine is a very good starting point for all people to work towards but I can add the following comments: One word not used in heading is "refuse" (refuse to do, buy etc.) It is not enough just to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle, important as these obviously are.

"Grow you own vegetables": this needs to be more strongly worded – we should all be able to grow something, even if only on a windowsill, patio or small garden. It is only through growing some of our own vegetables, salads, etc that we realise: a) how little we can grow, and b) what an easy life we have. If our crops fail, we can just walk round to the corner shop and buy frozen, tinned or fresh – not so those people in less well off countries.

"Reduce consumption of meat": this too needs to be much more strongly worded. You only need to attempt to complete an ecological footprint quiz to find out that it is necessary to become at least a serious vegetarian – preferably vegan – to begin to get near to "one planet".

I feel that Christian Ecology Link, like the vast majority of environmental groups, must address this last issue as it is becoming clearer every day that becoming a vegan is the only way forward if the world population is to be fed and watered, and carbon emissions reduced enough to make a real difference. I am sure you will have read some of the reports being issued by secular bodies like the World Watch Institution and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation. I know that many members of CEL will be on the Climate Change March this Saturday. I want you to know that if I were able to be on the march I would go under the banner of Christian Vegan. Wishing you God's blessing for future campaigning.

B R Marshall (Mrs)

(CVAUK member - Ed)

Winter 2008 Issue 66

Are We What We Eat?

I have some sympathy with Bill Palethorpe regarding the food we eat and certainly we all need to pay attention to this issue.

I'm not entirely sure. however, if it is up to CEL to actively promote vegan food. I agree that a smaller carbon footprint is obtained by eating a vegetable-based diet but there are many other factors that comprise a person's

life. We could, for example, grow much of our own food, never go near a supermarket yet be driving and flying frequently. What would this say about us and how would it affect our global impact? Should we be known as vegans, vegetarians or a whole host of other alternative words to describe what we eat.

I don't want to be described as a vegan, as to me the human personality is much more than the food we eat.

My feeling is that CEL should be a source of information to help us all decide how we should live. This will not be just the food we eat but many other factors that are part of our lives.

What I do want, however, is to be challenged as to how I am living so that I can assess and reflect on this and decide if I should modify my lifestyle.

Tony Porter

Winter 2008 Issue 66

Does CEL go far enough?

As a member of CEL and a vegetarian. I was pleased to read the excellent letters from Bill Palethorpe and Mrs B R Marshall (Summer 2008 edition), and wholeheartedly agree with their comments. I cannot imagine a God of love approving humanity's massive abuse of God's creatures. As the future of humanity becomes increasingly precarious, will God grant mercy to those who have shown no mercy towards his animals and indifference towards the destruction of his creation? The Bible relates that God promised never to flood the earth again, but the Bible does not contain a promise that God will spare humanity from the consequences of its own actions.

Troubled people throughout the world have favoured modest lifestyle adjustments, such as driving smaller cars and recycling. But rarely do we hear our church, government or ecology group calling for a move towards a plant-based diet. This strategy may be politically wise, in that it does not 'scare away' meat-eating: Christians from the church; supporters from the government; or activists from the ecology group. However, failure to encourage a plant-based diet profoundly undermines the credibility of these institutions.

I welcome CEL's new ecocell initiative which questions the ethics of factory farming, and encourages us to buy from local organic farmers and to reduce our meat consumption. This is certainly a step in the right direction, but to call any form of animal agriculture 'animal friendly' is stretching the truth a bit too far. as it always ends in treachery.

Finally, for ecocell to quote 1 Corinthians 10: 25-26 in support of our right to choose whether we eat meat or not, is really a misapplication of these verses. They conveniently ignore the previous two verses: "Everything is permissible – but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible - but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good but the good of others etc."

Surely, in a world of limited resource, it is neither permissible, constructive nor ethical to encourage an unsustainable, unnecessary, inefficient and uncompassionate meat based diet that only the rich can afford.

Don Gwillim

THE GRIM TRUTH

(Publication and date unknown)

This is a truly great letter to a newspaper, written in support of the NIRAH campaign to halt plans to establish an aquarium and aquatic research centre in Bedford. I felt it was well worth reproducing here .. Ed.

Those who claim that the lives of animals are of little or no importance reflect deep-seated speciesism, which is a form of fascism towards non-human animals. They defend the status quo of human supremacy as strongly as the supporters of slavery and white supremacy used to claim that the lives of slaves were of little value. Europeans called native Americans 'beasts' and Africans sold into slavery were treated like domesticated animals. During the Second World War, Americans described the Japanese as vermin to be exterminated.

Victims of the Nazis were killed in assembly-line fashion as animals are killed in slaughterhouses. The vilification of people as animals made it much easier to kill them because most humans have been brainwashed to have little or no regard for the lives of most animals.

The grim truth is our 'civilisation' is built on the exploitation of animals and it is from this cancer that all other atrocities flow. Those who advocate for animals are attacking the roots of human oppression. We must become aware of dualistic, divisive thinking as it becomes the basis for the discrimination that causes oppression and suffering.

Instead, we must see the relationships between all beings, instead of a separation into higher or lower, or good or evil.

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