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Affiliated Ministry
CVA (USA)



WHAT THE CHRISTIAN PAPERS SAY

September 2007

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All members

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Why concern for the environment is so important to CVAUK's campaigns

As you read this press compilation you will notice that 75% of articles/letters are concerning the environment, CVAUK believe that to have any chance of introducing vegetarianism into the church we need to jump onto this environmental bandwagon to show that vegetarianism is a logical Christian response to caring for God's creation.

We should encourage discussions in church/house groups on sustainability and highlight scriptures that confirm;

- (a) God's goodness and mercy embraces all of God's creation,
- (b) that by being made in God's image, we have a responsibility to become good stewards, caring for God's creation as God cares for us,
- (c) that the Gospel is good news for the whole of God's creation, not just humankind.

We should use every opportunity to pray for environmental justice for the poor and the rest of God's creation and submit articles to church newsletters/magazines. Once established you can argue that vegetarianism is a logical Christian response to humankind's destruction of god's creation. 'What the Christian Papers Say' is a fantastic resource which can be used to compose your prayers and support statements in your letters/articles to Christian newspapers and church magazines.

This current edition reflects the concern of the Catholic Press regarding global warming. It is interesting to note that the Methodists (see Methodist Recorder) are now taking Global Warming seriously but still only two articles in the Anglican press over the last four months.

In a hurry, 'must read' articles are highlighted by adding an asterisk on both sides of the title, as below:

Climate change could force 1 billion people from their homes

Unpublished letters

Many of us spend hours researching and writing unpublished letters to the Christian press. Do not let your efforts go to waste they could help and inspire other CVAUK members.

Please send to CVAUK any unpublished letters, together with a copy of the letter / article that initiated your letter, for possible inclusion in future CVAUK press compilations. For closing dates see front page.

N.B. The CVAUK press compilation also embraces a worldwide audience via. our website www.christianvegetarian.co.uk.

When writing letters to the press criticise constructively

There are times when we have to speak out. Issues of injustice and pain and suffering pull on the chords of our heart and we feel we must do something. So we should - righteousness and justice are from the same stable.

However, when we do feel the need to criticise - whether that be our politicians, our society or our church - we should do so with the conviction that we want to see people grow and develop. We should learn to speak the truth in love. It's better to say nothing, than to say something because of hate or prejudice.

Get involved

We cannot criticise our world, our society or our leaders if we are not willing to be part of the solution. Everyone of us is able to be a protester! We know what we do not like. If we feel passionate about politicians losing trust, then maybe we should become an example of a trustworthy politician? If we think our community is losing its identity and its strength, maybe we should help it to find it again.

Of course we need also to pray - to rely on God and his grace working through us. The more we connect with him, the more we will reflect him to the world around us. Here's a challenge we may not like - perhaps we have ended up with the society, government and leaders we deserve? Maybe, just maybe, there is a better, brighter and fairer society round the corner. Maybe it is hidden in the hearts of our neighbours and our friends. Maybe God is challenging us to move from our comfort zones to the place where he always wanted us to be - shaping and changing our world by being in it, but not of it. That would make us read the news differently, wouldn't it?

Rev. Malcolm Duncan

Extract from 'Looking for a leader' Christian Herald 21st May 2005.

Methodist Recorder

17th May 2007 *Climate change could force 1 billion people from their homes*

AT LEAST 1 billion people will be forced from their homes between now and 2050 as the effects of climate change deepen an already burgeoning global migration crisis, a new report by Christian Aid has predicted.

"Human tide: the real migration crisis", published to mark the 50th anniversary of Christian Aid Week, highlights a growing crisis threatening the future of many populations. It was launched in London earlier this week at a specially constructed mock refugee camp, designed to illustrate the poor conditions that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are forced to live in.

Around-155 million people worldwide are currently internally displaced within their own country due to conflict, disasters and large-scale development projects, such as dams and mines. The onset of climate change will see tens of millions more on the move, Christian Aid said.

The report warns that the world is now facing its largest ever movement of people forced from their homes, with predicted numbers far exceeding even those left as refugees following the Second World War. As the vast majority of these IDPs will be from the world's poorest countries, Christian Aid has called for the world community to take "urgent action" to avert the worst effects of this crisis.

Estimates on the impact of global warming predict that hundreds of millions of people will have to flee their homes after floods, drought and famine sparked by climate change. As such, security experts fear that this new migration will fuel existing conflicts and generate new ones in the poorest areas where resources are most scarce.

The report also notes that much migration coverage in the media has focused on economic migrants and asylum-seekers. It suggests that more should be done to help the plight of IDPs who have "no rights under international law and no official voice".

Special adviser to the UN Emergency Relief co-ordinator Dennis McNamara said: "Tens of millions of the poorest people in the poorest parts of the world are uprooted and lack basic assistance and protection. They are the world's voiceless and often inaccessible refugees.

"As Christian Aid's welcome new report says, their numbers can destabilise whole regions and may be an obstacle to building peace. Their problems must be urgently addressed, both for humanitarian as well as political and security reasons," he said.

Case studies in "Human tide: the real migration crisis", describe in detail how major internal migration crises have already developed in Sudan, Uganda and Sri Lanka. The main studies seek to highlight equally devastating situations that are still developing with far less attention from the wider international community.

*A downloadable PDF version of the report is available online
(www.christianaid.org.uk/indepth/705caweekreport).*

12th July 2007

Climate change challenge

A PASSIONATE call has been made at this year's Methodist Conference for every congregation in Methodism to take seriously the challenge of climate change. Churches, circuits and Districts are being urged radically to change their ways of working, from recycling more to planning green property schemes, so that their "carbon footprint" can be monitored and significantly reduced. The call comes just days after millions of people around the globe were alerted to climate change issues by the Live Earth concerts, including one at Wembley Stadium (See "MR Comment" - Next Page).

In order to resource and enable congregations to take action, the Methodist Church has teamed up with the United Reformed Church and Operation Noah, a project which encourages British churches to engage with environmental issues. Together they have produced a DVD - "God's Creation, Our Challenge" - and set up a website (www.creationchallenge.org.uk).

Ms Anthea Cox (co-ordinating secretary, Public Life and Social Justice) told Conference: "Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing our world today. We can only call for national legislative change if we are also taking action in our churches, our communities and our personal lifestyles. It is up to each of us to take responsibility."

The director of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF), Ms Kirsty Smith, said that MRDF is working with partner organisations in developing countries such as Guatemala, Kenya and El Salvador, where unpredictable weather and seasonal changes are under-mining crops and harvests. Farmers and communities are being encouraged to develop more small-scale, sustainable projects and crops instead. She told Conference: Floods, droughts and extreme weather have always been a problem, but global warming makes these events more frequent and more severe. Today we have the opportunity to examine our responsibility and our response.

By committing to measure and to limit the amount of CO2 we use as churches, agencies and individuals, and by encouraging Government and business to do the same, we can do our part in decreasing the impact that climate change is having on those who are least responsible but most affected by it!

Ms Ann Pettifor from Operation Noah (permission to speak) told Conference that it was time to renew the understanding of covenant - that it is not just between God and people, but between God, people and the whole earth. She said: "Greed drives us to live beyond our means, beyond our environmental budgets and to borrow from the future so we can indulge ourselves today. But it does not have to be this way. We can change. We can cut the shopping chains that bind us, we can cut the fossil fuel chains that bind us, we can avert the worse consequences of global warming."

The Rev Sara Cliff (Lincoln and Grimsby) told Conference that every church in Lincolnshire had received leaflets about what people could do to help reduce carbon emissions. A course looking at environmental issues had also been produced. Recent events such as the serious floods around Britain and the Live Earth concerts should be seen as signs of the times. "How as a Church and how are we responding to what the world is saying to us?" she asked.

During the debate, **the Rev Laisiasa Ratabacaca** from the Methodist Church in Fiji made an impassioned plea not to forget the people of the Pacific Islands, who were already suffering from rising seas and the effects of global warming. "As you are debating about preventing, and ways and means, we are drowning; he said. "Please come and help us".

Dr Stephen Leah (York and Hull) urged support for Christian Aid's current campaign which includes working towards a new internationally binding agreement on reducing carbon emissions.

The Rev Dr John Emmett (Bristol) spoke of the contribution that nuclear power could make to Britain's future energy needs, while **Mr Barry Natton (Liverpool)** highlighted the issue of zero carbon buildings and urged all churches and the Methodist Property office to look at how to respond environmentally and creatively to property issues, including new schemes. This did not have to be expensive or difficult. "We all feel frustrated sometimes when we hear about problems overseas. This is something we can do", he said.

The Rev David Haslam (London) spoke about Japan and Germany, where the Governments have already planned for 70,000 solar panels to be installed in homes. In Britain the figure was only 3,500 and the programme had just been stopped. He also suggested that renewable power was more acceptable than nuclear power.

Mr Bala Gnanapragasam (London) quoted Prime Minister Gordon Brown as saying that the issue of climate change was not just an environmental and ecological imperative, but amoral imperative. **The Rev Sheryl Anderson (London)** told Conference that the "current situation is "worse than unjust - it is a sin." "It is not enough to make our confession and be reassured of forgiveness - we also have to make reparation and act collectively to address it", she said. "This is a huge challenge but it is also a tremendous opportunity for the world to hear the Christian prophetic voice."

After the main debate on climate change took place, Conference was due to vote on resolutions later in the week which will challenge the Church at every level to reduce its carbon emissions. The proposals being considered also encourage the Government to introduce "robust policies" to reduce emissions and call on major UK businesses to sign up to carbon-reducing schemes. #

12th July 2007

Concern for the planet

MR Comment

AS the Methodist Conference opened in its Representative Session in Blackpool, a series of nine events was taking place across the globe in order to draw attention to the future of the globe. The Live Earth concerts saw some of the most famous and popular singers and bands trying to draw attention to the threat faced by the planet as a result of increasing carbon emissions and the acceleration of climate change.

Described by the organisers as the greatest show on the planet for the planet, the concerts drew audiences of millions as they tried to raise awareness of the major transformation that is required to the way we live. It is not surprising, then, that of the range of issues considered by the Methodist Conference that which probably has the greatest resonance outside the Conference hall will have been the report "Caring for Creation in the Face of Climate Change".

Attention

As well as drawing overdue attention to the Church's environmental policy that was adopted in 2000, the report also highlighted the way in which the world's poorest people are often those who are most at risk from climate change. During the last few weeks parts of Britain have seen very dramatically how the power of nature can cause damage to lives, homes and memories but we should not forget that the impact of climate change on developing countries where people are already at considerable risk is even greater. Thankfully, the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF), along with other aid agencies, are making climate change a major campaign focus.

In the midst of the workings of the Conference and the debates about the structure of the Methodist Church Connexional Team that can so often seem to be removed from the experience of many Methodists, here is an issue that is relevant to everyone and to everyone's grandchildren and their children. Here is an issue that affects us all and an issue in which, even in very small ways, we can effect change.

Such change may range from the use of energy-saving light bulbs to questioning our lifestyle and travel plans. At all times we have a responsibility and duty to ask if we are -doing more to help or hinder the protection of the planet. On this basis the Live Earth concerts were the subject of legitimate questioning, regarding both their effectiveness as well as the carbon footprint, resulting in people travelling to the events. What is not in question is that last weekend saw climate change become a significant news item.

Exempt

In going about the business of the Methodist Church we are not exempt from such searching questions simply by Conference resolution. Meeting venues that are not accessible by public transport contribute in a way that both sets a bad example to others and contributes to an unnecessary carbon footprint. Or, to put it another way, we add to the denial of life for the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters as we also deny the beauty and natural order of God's creation.

As the Christian community gathers, we share the bread and wine that the ancient liturgy reminds us is the fruit of the grain once dispersed on the hillside. In the very act of thanksgiving that stands at the heart of our faith we share in the fruits of creation as we are drawn into the body of Christ and become part of the cosmic work of love that creates, redeems, sanctifies and sustains all life. Such life that in turn has as a fundamental part of existence the duty of stewardship.

Our care for the, good things of God is intrinsic to our being God's grateful people. it is for us to express a concern for the planer that is not to enable us to have more or even better bread, but it is to honour God and ensure that all the children of the created order share in the bounty of generous love. #

9th August 2007

Land -grab in the Artic MR Comment

THE Conquistadors did it in South America, William Hobson did it in New Zealand and the Spaniards, the French and the British all did it in North America. Now the Russians have done it two-and-a-half miles below the North Pole. A flag has been planted and sovereignty claimed over an area which could contain 10 billion tonnes of gas and oil.

No one can question the technological expertise and zeal for exploration which led to the descent of two mini-submarines, first through holes cut in the polar ice and then deep into the uncharted depths of freezing ocean. What does cause deep concern is the significance that Russia has attached to the planting of a one-metre-high titanium flag on the floor of the ocean and the claim of the project leader, Artur Chilingarov, that the purpose of his mission was to prove that "the Arctic is Russian".

While a UN convention gives the five states with territory inside the Arctic Circle economic rights over a 200-mile zone to the north of their coastlines, Russia's intention seems to be to extend their own zone, justified by their claims that an underwater ridge in the polar region is linked to its own Siberian shelf.

Colonisations

It is little wonder that the Canadian foreign minister has likened this action to the colonisations of the 15th century, complaining that. "You can't go around the world and just plant flags and say, we're claiming this territory" No doubt the United States, Norway and Denmark (of which Greenland is a dependency) will also be watching closely this development and will be ready to rebut Russia's claim when it is resubmitted to the United Nations.

It is self-evident that competition for energy resources has the potential to cause international political instability or worse on a scale not seen since the end of the Cold War. The developed countries are consuming ever-increasing quantities of finite resources while developing countries are demanding a fairer share of energy in order to help drive development.

While the tide of public opinion in the United States seems to be turning, such change has yet to be manifested in policy changes and energy consumption in China, largely expended on producing goods to be sold in the West, continues to accelerate, with massive environmental impact.

Implications

This development is a reminder that the future of this planet hinges on its use of energy, the effects of that use on the earth's eco-systems and the political implications of energy-rich and energy-poor countries all seeking greater shares of finite resources. While Russia and her neighbours in the Arctic region may all want a greater share of the pie, none of them needs it. What they want is the wealth and political power which the possession of such resources will give them. And the rich countries and individuals will get richer (how many Premiership football clubs could be purchased with the proceeds of Arctic energy, one wonders?) while the poorest countries of the world get poorer.

One only has to read Genesis to be reminded that the earth is the Lord's and that we are stewards of it. The earth has a value which cannot be measured in the yield of coal, oil or gas, and the earth is a gift for all of God's children. While the five Arctic nations will no doubt argue over boundaries for many years to come, issues of the way we exploit the earth and share its resources are of worldwide significance.

Fred Pratt Green's hymn of the early 1970s, "God in his love for us lent us this planet", originally contained a verse omitted in "Hymns and Psalms". It's a verse that ought to be sung across the globe a generation later:

*Casual despoilers, or high priests of Mammon, Selling the future for present rewards,
Careless of life and contemptuous of beauty: Bid them remember: the Earth is the Lord's. #*

From League Against Cruel Sports

A broad church?

Are all things bright and beautiful in the eyes of the church?

Louise Clark examines religious attitudes towards animals

Can religion be used to further the cause of animal welfare or is it in fact hostile to any such concept? The main religions of the world place different emphases on the worth of animals, and human responsibility towards them. The eastern religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, tend to foster attitudes of non-violence and compassion towards animals. The western religions, however, such as Christianity and Judaism, have only recently begun to articulate some positivity towards animals, Islam sits in between, with both positive and negative views and traditions.

The eastern religions - for example, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism - have a fundamental commitment to the principle of refraining from harming any living thing (ahimsa). Other central doctrines also remind followers about the need to be respectful to the rest of creation. The ultimate aim for Buddhists, for example, is to be set free from the cycle of pain and rebirth and enter the state of nirvana/enlightenment. The way to achieve this is to live compassionately in order to generate good karma.

Karma is the law of cause and effect, which affects the status of your next life. The process of rebirth means one could be reborn as an animal, and this means 'All male beings have been my father and all females have been my mother. There is not a single being who has not given birth to me during my previous lives'. Therefore, the animal being mistreated may, in fact, have been your mother in a previous life. If you would not wish to cause her harm, it is a good idea to refrain from harming any creature. In the process, this creates good karma for yourself, meaning a step closer to nirvana.

In addition, for Buddhists, the four noble truths state that all life is suffering. Suffering is caused by actions that have brought harm to any living creature and produced negative karma. The highest and most universal ideal of Buddhism is to work unceasingly for the permanent end to the suffering of all interdependent living beings, both humans and animals.

Western religions, such as Christianity and Judaism, by contrast, are traditionally less concerned about animals. The problem, and reason for this negativity has been in the interpretation of aspects of the book of Genesis. Mankind is pictured in the 'image of God and given dominion over creation. Dominion has often been wrongly interpreted as domination rather than care. However some modern thinkers argue that too much emphasis has been placed on humans, reflecting humans' own arrogance. De-emphasis on animal welfare also stems from the influence of St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). He had argued, from a pre-scientific perspective, that animals are solely for the use of human beings.

Despite this, there are some positive stories. St Francis of Assisi is associated with caring for animals in their own right, and St Isaac the Syrian (in the seventh century) summarised a compassionate lifestyle as 'a heart burning with love for the whole creation, for humans for all creatures, a heart which can no longer bear the smallest pain being inflicted on a creature'. Therefore, when animals are involved, human goals cannot be the only consideration.

Recently, this positive view has re-emerged by affirming that creation is included in the scope of God's care. Aquinas had pictured God as spaceless, timeless and totally other than the universe. However, a different view of God is that of a being intimately connected with the suffering of creation, feeling every pain of every creature as his own. The Anglican theologian, Andrew Linzey, has aimed to incorporate compassion for animals more fully into Christianity by emphasising that God's love is for the whole of creation. Biblical passages can be quoted to support this view, which pictures a final hope of peace and harmony among all creation.

One problem faced by all the major religions is the capacity for disagreement that so often occurs between individuals of the same faith. Perhaps what is needed in the area of animal welfare and religion is a broad perspective. Most religions agree that this world was ultimately created by a higher being called God. This belief should have consequences for the way in which animals are treated.

Animals are of value in themselves and for themselves, but also to an ultimate being who continues to take an interest in their welfare. Religion also needs to be self-reflective to ensure that pre-scientific customs do not infringe upon animal welfare and are not upheld simply for the sake of ritual observance. Then religion could, in fact, be a very useful weapon in the fight against cruelty and unnecessary suffering inflicted upon animals.

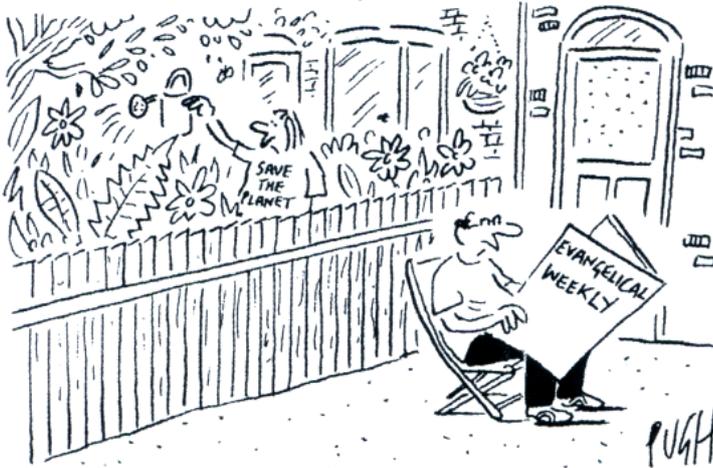
The Tablet

30th June 2007

Greening of the promised land

By The Rt Revd James Jones

American Evangelicals have long suspected the environmental movement of having a left-wing agenda that would undermine business and religion. But, reports James Jones, in the battle for hearts and minds some of their number are now being won over to the cause.



It is estimated that up to 45 per cent of the electorate voting for the Republican Party are either Evangelical Christians or at least in sympathy with that world-view and that this constituency is one of the most influential lobbies in American politics. It is not an exaggeration to say that we will not understand how America acts in the world until we understand the way that many in America read the Bible.

Certainly as we tiptoed towards the third millennium few predicted the major role that religion would play in the twenty-first century. Islam in the Arab world and Evangelical

Christianity in America now offer ideological and religious frameworks of immense political potency. Although Evangelicalism in America shares some of the same roots as Britain's, it has grown into a very different garden. But there is just enough common ground for dialogue across the pond and there are some heroic leaders who are courageously challenging hitherto cherished positions. A chasm of distrust has opened up between Evangelicals and environmentalists. The former see the latter as New Age, pagan, liberal and Democrat. These words are anathema to Evangelical Christians, who politically inhabit a position to the right of centre. The latter see the former as rapists of the earth, responsible for pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol and putting into the White House an enemy of the environment.

In a seminar on faith and sustainable development at the World Bank in Washington, I became aware of the source of the resistance by Evangelicals to the environmental agenda. At the risk of gross oversimplification, many see the environmentalist position as bad religion, bad science, bad business and bad for America.

During a conversation with a leading and influential American Evangelical I was made aware of the depth of fear that drives the resistance to the environmental agenda. He saw environmentalism as the Trojan horse that would bring the country to its knees; having seen off Communism he feared that they would now fall victim to the new left-wing conspiracy that would destroy America. He sincerely believed that the response needed from God-fearing, flag-loving Americans was to be vigilant and sceptical about the scientific claims about climate change, to be protective of American jobs and to challenge the godless liberalism that undermined traditional moral virtues.

In another article in the New York Review entitled 'Welcome to Doomsday' Bill Moyes charts how it is "a coupling of ideology and theology that threatens our ability to meet the growing ecological crisis". In particular, he shows how Evangelical Christianity's predictions about the end of the world influence some Evangelicals' attitudes to the earth. If I were to summarise his thesis and this world-view, it would be something like this: "Because the Bible says that one day the earth will end up in a ball of flames, you might as well milk the earth for all it's worth while you've got time." Couple this with a view that everything on earth has come into being for us to enjoy and even exploit and you can almost understand why you could pull out of Kyoto and merrily emit into the atmosphere 25 per cent of the world's carbon. To the chagrin of the likes of Bill Moyes this world-view is broadcast through many of the 1,600 Christian radio stations and 250 Christian TV stations across America.

A fine example of the interconnection between religion and politics in America is to be found in a speech given by Michael Gerson to the Ethics and Public Policy Center in December 2004. Gerson was until last year Head of Speech Writing and Policy Adviser to President Bush. In his revealing speech about the use of religious language and images in political rhetoric Gerson identifies five categories where the President consciously uses religious imagery in his speeches. These are: (i) offering comfort in grief and mourning; (ii) appealing to the historic influence of faith on America; (iii) supporting faith-based welfare reform; (iv) alluding to hymns and Scripture embedded in American culture; and (v) referring to providence. However, Gerson states explicitly, "The important theological principle here ... is to avoid identifying the purposes of an individual or a nation with the purposes of God."

In spite of Gerson's attempt to avoid the temptation of identifying the purposes of God with the interests of America, language used by the President such as "crusade" and "axis of evil" has led others outside America, to infer and resent such an alignment and has fed those within her borders a diet to nourish the faith of the children of the Pilgrim Fathers. Jonathan Edwards, one of the leading Evangelical divines of the seventeenth century, was, according to his latest biographer, George Marsden, typical of the first settlers and their descendants, who saw themselves living out literally the promise of Jesus Christ that his followers would go "to the ends of the earth" to be his witnesses. This is deeply rooted in the American psyche and explains why appeals to providence, to destiny, to enemies, to frontiers, to faith, to evil, to prayer and to prophetic images still resonate in the American imagination.

One of the conundrums of the comparison between our two nations is that in America, where Church and State are formally separated, religious expression is much more intense and church attendance much higher; here in Britain, where the Church of England is established, religious affiliation and expression are much more muted.

People like Michael Gerson believe that erasing religion from public discourse "could remove one of the main sources of social justice in our history": He goes on: "without an appeal to justice rooted in faith, there would be no abolition movement, no civil rights movement, no pro-life movement" in America. Now Gerson is one of the most articulate and influential Evangelicals in America, and has put words into the mouth of the President.

Although the relationship between American Evangelicals and the environment raises the issue of the relationship of faith to politics, it also raises the question as to what the Christian faith says about the environment. Theological opinion in America is shifting. Last year 86 Evangelical leaders signed a declaration about global warming and published it in The New York Times. It was headed "Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action". Some of the people who added their names came under considerable pressure from politicians and from other Evangelical leaders who have resisted the environmental agenda on the grounds that such a call is based on bad science and bad religion. Two of the leading "converts" to the environmental cause are Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and Jim Ball of the Evangelical Environmental Network. Both pay tribute to the work and advocacy of Sir John Houghton, who served as co-chairman of the Scientific Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and who is one of the most authoritative climatologists. In 2004 Sir John with others organised a conference in Oxford on climate change to which religious leaders from America, including Richard Cizik, were invited. Richard Cizik found the journey to Oxford his Damascus Road. He was compelled by the scientific evidence.

But there was another factor that weighed heavily with Richard Cizik and his Evangelical, colleagues. Sir John is not only a distinguished scientist but is also a Christian. This is something that Sir John does not advertise but in his quiet and dignified manner is not ashamed of either. For Evangelicals in America, who, for a variety of reasons, are wary of the scientific community, it enables them to hear and consider the scientific arguments with less suspicion and prejudice.

But there is yet another feature in this episode that is significant. Sir John Houghton has over the years worked closely with Professor Sam Berry, Emeritus Professor of Genetics at University College London, and Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance, an expert on the Amazon rainforest and formerly director of Kew Gardens, to build a bridge between, to use Sir Crispin Tickell's words, "thought and action" on the changing climate. All three share the same Christian faith and all three stand within the Evangelical tradition, which is why they have had such a persuasive impact on American Evangelicals. If there is a sustained shift in opinion among American Evangelicals in favour of caring for the environment (or to use their phrase "Creation Care"); and, if this shift translates into changing attitudes at voter level so that there is a change of policy at national as well as state level, then, when history is written, there should be at least a footnote on the influence of these three Evangelical environmental musketeers. I have had a ringside seat at some of the discussions and witnessed the dynamics of minds and hearts changing.

In July of last year there was a seminar at St George's House, Windsor, which was convened under the title "Evangelicals and the Care of Creation". The invitees were leading American Evangelicals. With the support of St George's House and funding from the Tudor Trust and Tearfund, the consultation addressed head on the concerns within the American Evangelical community about the environmental agenda. The Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright, expounded the biblical basis for the care of Creation; Sir John Houghton, Sir Ghilleen Prance and Professor Sam Berry set out the scientific evidence and the theological and moral case for urgent action and Lord Oxburgh, previously Chairman of Shell, examined and enthused about the enormous opportunities for investment and business. The Prince of Wales invited guests to Highgrove to see the organic farm and gardens and to witness sound ecological principles being put into practice. This consultation was a genuine conversation and opinions began to change.

Five months later several of those involved then took part in an historic consultation in South Georgia where scientific and Evangelical leaders met to search for common ground and to "unite to protect Creation".

The meeting was convened by the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and the National Association of Evangelicals. It resulted in "An Urgent Call to Action" published in Washington on 17 January this year. It called on "every sector of America's leadership - religious, scientific, business, political and educational - [to] act now to work towards fundamental change in values, lifestyles and public policies ... before it is too late".

The significance of the statement is revealed by the reaction to it from other sections of the Evangelical community. On 1 March this year the Chairman and the Board of the NAE were, in effect, called on to sack Richard Cizik, their vice-president for government relations. Leading Evangelicals from influential organisations such as Coalitions for America and American Values challenged his views on Global warming, saying they were shifting the emphasis "away from the great moral issues of our time" such as "the sanctity of human life, the integrity of marriage and the teaching of sexual abstinence and morality to our children". I personally subscribe to all three but, sadly, under the heading of "great moral issues of our time" there was no mention of global poverty, economic injustice, racism, pollution or consumerism, which undeniably threaten the quality and sanctity of human life around the world.

The positive shift in Evangelical opinion among some leaders and the negative reaction within the wider Evangelical community demonstrates that there is still a furious debate taking place in America. In less than 18 months Americans will elect a new President. Already politicians are making a pitch for that Evangelical vote that helped secure the presidency for George W. Bush but that deserted the Republicans at the Congressional elections in November last year. I do not think it is an exaggeration to suggest that the redefining of priorities by Evangelicals in America could have a decisive effect on the election and the future of America, and hence the future of the earth.

If ever there were a time when we needed to be in dialogue with our transatlantic cousins, it is now. In my view there are two major theological points that need to be made in the debate in America.. First, the concept of human dominion over the earth needs to be qualified. It is true that in Genesis 1:28, humanity is given dominion over the earth. What many people overlook is that this dominion is immediately qualified in the following chapter where Adam is set by God in the Garden to "till it and keep it". This is an inadequate translation, for the words properly mean "to serve and preserve" the earth. In other words, the relationship between humanity and the earth is to be characterised by servant lordship. The dominion spoken of in Genesis does not mean that humanity is apart from Creation but a part of it. The only other time this phrase "to till and to keep" or "to serve and preserve" is used is in the Book of Numbers where it describes the ministry of the priests in the temple. Just as the Levites were to serve God by ministering within the temple so Adam is called to serve God by caring for the earth in the Garden. The Bible gives nobody a mandate to rape the earth.

Secondly, there is clearly a link between eschatology and ecology, and by that I mean a link between what we think will happen to the earth and how we now treat the earth. Some people subscribe to what is in effect a theology of obliteration. This means that if you believe that one day the world will end in some great cosmic combustion then you need not worry about what happens to it now. It means that you can concentrate your efforts on securing your personal salvation in another world.

However, although the Bible talks about the future in language of both continuity and discontinuity, the overall sense of Scripture is that God is at work sustaining, renewing and transforming his Creation rather than destroying it. The Lord's Prayer has at its heart the petition for God's will to be done "on earth as it is done in Heaven" The biblical vision of the future is one in which heaven and earth are fused together. The case for sustaining the earth is based on good religion, good science and good business. To care for it is good for Europe, for America, and for all humanity.

The Rt Revd James Jones is Bishop of Liverpool. This is an edited version of a lecture given at St George's, Windsor, on 1 June. #

21st July 2007

Too big for the planet?

By Mary Colwell

A study has suggested that one way to protect the environment would be to have smaller families. But without cutting consumption, that's throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

It seems that family size is no longer just a personal matter. Last week the Optimum Population Trust (OPT) suggested that parents in the UK and other countries should consider restricting their families to two children as part of an effort to contain the world's growing environmental crisis. According to the trust, a think tank dedicated to reducing population growth, volunteering to stop at two would enable couples to adopt a greener lifestyle, a limit that is not so much about reducing the use of nappies but about reducing the impact of an individual on the planet during the whole three score years and 10 - and maybe more - of their lives. The trust suggests that the impact of one person's life is equivalent to 620 return flights between London and New York. And with 669,531 babies born in England and Wales last year, and the birth rate running at a 26-year high of 1.87 children per woman, that's an awful lot of flights. The rate is increasing elsewhere in Europe too,



after years of downward spiral. Countries such as France, Denmark and Sweden have maintained high birth rates, partly through generous allowances.

For those of us concerned about the environment, the birth rate is not something that can be considered in isolation, country by country. Global impact is the issue. But a limit to families is nevertheless a shocking idea, particularly if such a limit might become official policy. There is nothing to support a position that says that two children is the optimum number for producing good citizens. It is how a family operates and the values it imparts that are equally, if not more, important. Large families give children an experience of life in a community that others could well learn from. They have to accommodate the needs of those older and younger and have to learn to share what is available. Living well in a community is essential if the future is going to be sustainable and make the best use of resources, since it is lifestyle and resource use that determine how many people the earth can support. Yet it is also true that fewer people will certainly help. Jonathon Porritt, one of Britain's leading authorities on the environment, suggested in a recent interview that "finding a way to create

a sustainable solution for one billion people would be a great deal easier than finding one for six billion, let alone nine billion, which is what the world population is expected to be by 2050" He went on to say: "Ignoring the issue of population strikes me as the biggest own goal the environment movement has ever scored."

Porritt's view, and his subsequent one - that there should be much more emphasis on informed use of contraception and education for women - are shared by most people in the environmental movement. But the situation is far more complicated and full of subtleties than is allowed for in the simple goal of "fewer people".

Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has pointed out that it has become fashionable to "push the problem [of the environment] off on to over-population ... People say that the real problem is that there are too many people, in Africa and India usually, in other words it's not about us. Over-population is a global issue and not something that we can tell other people to do something about." What Rowan Williams is reflecting is that we in the West are just as much part of the problem as countries with burgeoning numbers. While the birth rates in poor countries do tend to be higher than in richer ones, the prosperity of Western countries with lower rates also has a profound effect on the environment. The traditional demographic pyramid, with young people outnumbering old people, and which has been seen in societies for thousands of years, is disappearing in Europe. But the using-up of resources continues apace. The real concern for all of us is not that the populations of Africa, China and India are increasing but that as they grow in numbers and wealth they are developing a Western model of living: increasing consumption and escalating expectations. We are alarmed because everyone wants to be like us. If the world had a different model to aspire to, to live like the Old Order Amish for example, then I doubt we would be having this discussion. Rather than sheer numbers, it is the lack of sustainability that is the real problem. So the picture is complicated and full of subtlety. Where does Catholicism fit into this? If the Church is to be bold and visionary in a world in crisis then it has to face these issues head on and I think there are some things that are vital and actually easy to do. One of them is being done already. The livesimply project is a Catholic initiative that promotes a change to a simple lifestyle as a symbolic and practical demonstration of our solidarity with the poor. It will also, by definition, reduce our consumption. It is heartening to see Cafod putting environmental issues higher on their agenda and linking environment and poverty more directly and that process needs to be continued and developed.

But the Church must also engender an atmosphere of openness and honesty about birth control and concerns about a growing population. We know the official teaching on accepted methods of natural birth control and on artificial contraception, but what does the laity, those with families, in all conscience think to be right? Does the Church have a view on population level? As long as these are issues that no one in the Church wants to acknowledge or discuss, it will always be an easy target for those who claim that the Catholic Church is "irresponsible" and that if it promoted contraception it would go a long way to solving environmental problems. My local parish priest wants to start a series of discussions on being a Catholic in the modern world. No theology, no highbrow intellectualising, no soapboxes, no campaigns - just an open discussion, with plain talking about the realities of life. This is exactly what is needed. Once Catholics are open about the issues surrounding population it will be much easier to engage in meaningful debate with those outside the Church.

While the environmental movement is adept at pointing out what is wrong with the world, it is poor in its understanding of human psychology. Its message is finger-wagging, and, in the case of an issue such as family size, oppressive. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has been very bad at recognising the seriousness of environmental issues but superb at understanding the way people work. What the world needs is for these two great bodies of knowledge and understanding to come together in fruitful union, sharing their wisdom and knowledge. At the moment each world fails to see the other as a valuable partner.

The Catholic Church has a vision for the future of all humanity, one in which poverty is eradicated, there is justice and peace for all, and where each individual lives a life of dignity and is in a sustainable and healthy relationship with the natural world; it is called the Kingdom of God. Environmental organisations have a vision for the same future but God, for the majority of those involved, plays no or little part. But without the compassion, understanding and wisdom that Christianity brings to human problems it could become all too easy for draconian measures such as enforced family size to be perceived as the most practical way forward.

The world is desperately searching for answers to huge and overwhelming problems. The livesimply campaign is a perfect example of a Catholic initiative that all environmental organisations welcome and should support. Let's hope that many more such insights come to the fore and that the environmental organisations and the Church now work closely together towards a mutually desired goal.

Mary Colwell works for the BBC's Natural History Unit.

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28th July 2007

Living cleverly

Mary Colwell's recent article ("Too big for the planet?", 21 July 2007) addressed a number of topics related to the global population but made no mention of food supply. As the human family doubled from three to six billion in the latter part of the twentieth century it was the green revolution led by Norman Borlaug which provided the huge increase in crop yields which were needed.

The environmentalists on the other hand have spent the last 40 years campaigning against modern farming. The general improvement in life expectancy throughout most of the world provides its own comment.

The world's population is expected to peak at about nine billion by 2050. This will mean that the growth rate will have fallen from about 20 per cent per decade to less than zero in the course of 100 years: a change that is more attributable to increasing prosperity than anything else, except of course in China.

Our current system of farming is being more than stretched as the emerging nations seek to improve their diets and crops are diverted to biofuels. We have no more land to use, and we will have a further three billion mouths to feed. Another revolution in farming practice is urgently needed. The technology is here, but is opposed by the environmentalists who have become a dead hand on the prospects for the emerging nations.

All predictions about resource depletion are related to current technology in terms of accessibility, rate of consumption and recycling. They are usually wrong. We mustn't let our limited current view become a barrier to progress for the generations to come. Living simply may appeal to some, but living cleverly might be a much better way.

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Mary Colwell is right to remind us that the global environmental crisis is fuelled by population growth and consumerism. Living sustainably is an essential behavioural adaptation for all affluent societies, not just the Catholic Church.

Livesimply (www.livesimply.org.uk) is a commendable call to Catholics to reduce their day-to-day consumerism. By comparison "An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle" (1980) contains sections on stewardship, poverty and wealth, personal lifestyle, international development, justice and politics, which informs from a biblical rather than a denominational perspective.

To compare and contrast the environmental movement ("poor in understanding of human psychology") with the Catholic Church ("superb at understanding the way people work") simply beggars belief for those outside the inward-looking institutions of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Daily Mail

29th May 2007

I'm giving up milk, says Heather

HEATHER Mills has announced that she has become a vegan. The estranged wife of Sir Paul McCartney is using her celebrity status to become a standard bearer for the movement against eating meat and milk. Miss Mills, pictured, said she had decided to become a vegan after learning more about farming methods and their impact on the environment.

She added: 'I'm a vegan now - a healthy diet which saves animals, something very important to me as I detest cruelty. 'Following a plant-based diet not only benefits your health massively but also makes a huge difference to the planet, to animals and to feeding the world. My hope is to continue to put the message out there.'

Miss Mills believes there are various health concerns linked to cow's milk, including allergies.

But she said a key objection is the way milk is produced. 'It is the obscenity of taking newborn calves away from their mothers so we can have their milk - a product designed by evolution for little cows, not little people, or big people for that matter.' She added she was convinced her decision was the right one. 'I could never go back to eating meat, fish or dairy,' she said. 'I hate the cruelty of factory farming.'

The Universe

10th June 2007

Comment by Fr Shay Cullen

WHAT could be more important than to protect and nurture our lives and the lives of others? — the protection of the source of life itself. Yet humankind is damaging and destroying so much of the planet at such a phenomenal rate that many species are extinct and others are on the edge of extinction. The health and well being of billions of people are not only under threat but are already deteriorating with such rapidity that whole nations are in crises. Their people's behaviour, their environment, rivers, seas, forests and climate are in severe process of change.

Natural species are being exterminated day by day and humans are in a health crises that they have never faced before. We are into a new and dangerous era of mankind. Is there any one common factor behind all of this doom and gloom or is it a complex series of events interwoven in history that has caused such catastrophes?

The evidence is mounting that contradicts of the widely held belief that we humans are the superior intelligent creatures on the planet. An alien looking at the earth would conclude our primitive intelligence has failed to evolve and develop. Humankind, they would see is more driven by animal instinct than intelligent decision making. Despite enormous brains and a sophisticated technological age that boggles the imagination, two thirds of all humans live in abject poverty and ignorance, while billions of humans are illiterate, destitute and starving. Those with the developed resources, vast knowledge, unsurpassed technological skills, immense possessions and an abundance of food are still killing each other with such sustained and premeditated ferocity that the most savage dinosaurs and beast could never match.

That's us! The species with big brains have evolved as killing machines par excellence and very territorial. We rule with rockets and bombs where Tyrannosaurus Rex once roamed with claw and tooth. Our big brains changed little of the primitive urge to dominate others, eliminate rivals, and kill all intruders on our territory. We humans are destroying the self sustaining harmony of the planet. We are refusing our own evolutionary destiny and step up the ladder a higher spiritual experience and an enlightened way-of-life.

Humankind is mired in apathy and stagnation resisting the spiritual values and energy of love of others that might empower mind and spirit to enable it to survive beyond death. The animal instincts that lurk in the base of the brain below the cortex are powerful drives that dominate human behaviour and shape our world. Our instincts propel us to satisfy those primitive drives for food, sleep, sex, territorial control and to send our genes down the river of time to the next generation, just as we see in the animal kingdom.

It is only the hermits and the monks of all religions that strive to conquer these drives by denying them in order to free their spirit and allow it to evolve to the higher plane and open a new age of spiritual experience for human kind. They are but few. The drive to have power and security through food dominance has led some nations to take control of vast lands, deprive others, destroy forests and environments and overproduce in a way that causes others to starve. The animal drive for sex has spawned a worldwide sex tourist industry without boundaries. It makes re-production of the species secondary and physical sexual satisfaction an end in itself.

The result of this is the exploitation of the hungry, plummeting populations, labour shortages and weak economies. This is then followed by mass migration and bloody internal conflict. The drive for territorial control and power can be savage, primitive, and bloody. It is pursued with tooth and claw, destructive and devastating.

The pursuit of power by economic war is now global and results in the subjugation of the weak by the powerful. This pursuit for economic dominance has a price - the reversible damage to the earth, its systems and climate. We are at war with ourselves, with each other and with the planet. The human species is devolving, heading for extinction and bringing every other` species with it. #

22nd July 2007 We Can't forget the poor in rush to save the planet

Progressio's Sol Oyuela says that the involvement of poor communities in decisions which directly affect them is vital if climate change and poverty are to be tackled together.

YOU may have noticed that you can now buy acres of land in the Amazonian rainforest as a way of combating global warming. The idea is that you will price the Amazon deforestation industry out of the market, so that carbon stays stored in the trees rather than being released into the atmosphere. This is the solution of one of a number of northern-based charities, including Cool Earth, launched last month, to the threat of climate change.

Although such organisations are responding to our call to take action on what is now seen as the biggest challenge of our time, what is worrying is that some of these initiatives appear to be taking control of rainforest land away from the indigenous local people who depend on it for every aspect of their lives. Cool Earth says that it works `hand in hand with partners' to invest in sustainable local production, and we at Progressio would be interested to know more about how they do this. Progressio is concerned that the hype around climate

change has led to oversimplified solutions that may ignore the reality for the poor people who depend on the environment's natural resources.

The basic needs of the poor in Latin America, Africa and Asia where Progressio works have always been met by natural resources which provide them with food, energy, water; housing, good health, employment and an income. These people have already noticed changes in the climate. In Ecuador for example, our partner CEPUC (Centro de Estudios Pluriculturales) works with native Kichwa communities in the Imbakucha basin. The older generation say they no longer know when to sow because the rains do not come as expected. This is confirmed by scientific evidence including the UN's Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which this year said: "In the Sahelian region of Africa, warmer and drier conditions have led to a shorter growing season with detrimental effects on crops." In southern Africa people are already adapting to longer dry seasons and more uncertain rainfall.

People from poor Ugandan communities, when consulted by their government, said that as the quality of the physical environment declines – whether it be infertile soil, deforestation, pasture degradation or decreasing fish stocks – their opportunities to make a living and increase their income is limited, which makes them more vulnerable to future shocks such as climate change. And the future is shocking, according to the IPCC: climate change will lead to food shortages for 75 to 250 million people in Africa, and in Latin America "salinisation and desertification of agricultural land" in drier areas will similarly affect food security.

Climate change has been caused primarily by rich countries, so it is primarily our responsibility to tackle it. There are domestic steps that we can take to cut our carbon emissions such as saving energy by turning off lights and appliances; using energy saving bulbs; switching to a green energy provider; insulating our homes; polluting less by driving less and using a train rather than a plane; reducing, reusing and recycling our waste. Alongside this we can lobby government for structural change to the economy to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

It is a matter of justice that we pay for developing countries to adapt to the environmental changes we have already caused. It is absolutely vital that such adaptation to global climate change and the prevention of local environmental damage caused by southern activities is led by poor communities themselves so that poverty and environmental degradation can be tackled together.

Progressio's experience shows this is possible. In Nicaragua, for example, one of our local partners, AMUNSE (Asociación de Municipios de Nueva Segovia) works in an area of extreme poverty to make sure that the voices of the poor, particularly women, are heard by the local authorities managing natural resources, in order to prevent the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources that has caused rapid environmental degradation. And in Honduras, our partner MAO (Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho) is a citizens' movement of peasants and villagers who denounce the illegal activities of timber merchants and miners, in order to prevent the destructive activities that have caused environmental crisis in the region.

The selling of the Amazonian rainforest to individuals in the North vividly highlights the power imbalance between the Southern poor and us. We need to give power back to poor communities so that they are not excluded from decisions regarding the management of the natural resources that are so crucial for their lives. This is the only way they can overcome poverty and stop environmental damage.

Sol Oyuela is Progressio's environmental advocacy coordinator. Progressio works with civil groups and governments in 11 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia, the UK and Europe to strengthen civil society, combat HIV and AIDS and support sustainable agriculture. We lobby for fair policy internationally and strengthen local organisations representing the poor.

To find out more about our work, go to www.progressio.org.uk

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29th July 2007

The Universe Comment

Floods are fault of human folly , not act of God

THOUGH most of us would stop short of suggesting that the devastating floods sweeping England and Wales are a punishment from God, the million or so people affected by this disaster must be wondering what they've done to deserve such a catastrophe. St Matthew (5:45) reveals to us that it rains alike on the just and unjust, so the rising flood waters are unlikely to be a traditional 'act of God', as some clergymen have tried to suggest; more likely they are a consequence of human folly.

God gave us this world we live in to be subdued and tamed, but not abused. In that respect many of the factors that have contributed to so much misery in the wake of the floods are entirely human – global warming, poor strategic planning, lack of investment in infrastructures, and the building of homes on flood plains. Not only are they entirely human, but many of these factors run counter to God's design for this planet. So are floods a punishment? No, but living in communion with nature and the divine purpose might have prevented them having such devastating consequences for so many people.

We are often told that we are 'stewards of creation', in this context disasters are a painful reminder that, instead of living as if we owned the earth, we need urgently to recover a sense of being participants in a complex eco-system with responsibilities to the environment, and to our neighbour. For those struggling to

rebuild their lives in the coming months, those words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are vitally important, because they do refute the old notion that such disasters are punishments from God.

On the contrary, Jesus says that they are visited equally on us all, and in particular occur as a challenge to make us love even our enemies. With many thousands of acres of the countryside under water this week, few victims will be making any judgements about their neighbour. As with every other natural disaster, the presence of Christ in adversity is to be found in the levelling of humanity, and the willingness to join with others in bringing comfort and relief to the afflicted. Of course it will be many weeks before victims can return to anything like normal life, so we ask you to reflect on the Sermon on the Mount, and to pray for those trying to piece their lives back together. #

19th August 2007

Priest's concern over Heathrow runway plan

By Fr Paul Bonnici

AS hundreds of protesters this week camped next to Heathrow Airport to demonstrate against global warming, the priest of a parish only one mile away from the airport has spoken of his mixed feelings about the proposed third runway. Around 2,000 people were expected to descend on land near the airport as part of the Camp for Climate Action demonstration.

Fr Brian Smith, parish priest of St Catherine's in West Drayton, said parishioners living in the village of Harmondsworth were frightened as they would lose their homes if the third runway went ahead. "This is going to have a devastating effect on people whose residences are in the line of the planned development," said Fr Smith. The British Airports Authority (BAA); which runs Heathrow Airport, has said people in 700 properties in Harmondsworth which could be demolished have been blocked from selling their homes until a decision about a third runway is made.

Fr Smith said that both noise and pollution would increase if the development went ahead. "At the moment, I live five minutes walk away from a park. I can see the planes from the park but very rarely do I hear them," he said, "only if the wind is in a certain direction. "Obviously if there is going to be a runway which would further encroach into my parish, the level of noise is going to increase in this area and consequently the level of pollution. "On both counts, it is probably going to have a detrimental effect on the environment."

Fr Smith, who has many of his parishioners working at Heathrow in areas as varied as security, desk clerks, air crew or engineers, added that in terms of jobs, the proposed third runway may increase employment. "I have not come down on one side or the other," he added. "I can see both sides of the argument, but I think at the end of the day, the detrimental effects are going to outweigh the benefits.

Expansion

"One of the major impacts it will have apart from noise and pollution on the area and the surrounding environment will be a detrimental effect on the health of the people living in the area. "This includes those people who have at the moment or may get in the future breathing problems, and conditions such as asthma and eczema. I am sure that one of the factors which will crop up will be people's health." The week-long protest at Heathrow is calling on the government to halt the planned expansion, which campaigners say will contribute to climate change.

A fifth terminal is to open at Heathrow in March 2008 and a new runway has been proposed by the government for 2020. BAA said Heathrow, the UK's only hub airport and one of Britain's most important economic assets, was full, already operating at 98.5 per cent of permitted runway capacity and "vulnerable to foreign competition". A spokesman for BAA said: "Without further growth, Heathrow will not be able to meet the demands of business and leisure travellers and the health of the UK economy will suffer." She added that although it had been suggested that the environmental costs of Heathrow outweighed its economic benefits, BAA believed that if capacity at Heathrow continued to be constrained, foreign hubs such as Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Paris would grow instead. The Government has announced that it supports the future growth of Heathrow, "subject to strict environmental limits". #

5th August 2007

Floods are a stark warning that none of us can ignore

By Paul Donovan

THE recent flooding of central England coincided with the announcement by the housing minister Yvette Cooper that house building would proceed on flood plains. The coincidence of these two events confirmed a lack of joined-up thinking in government. The language of ministers, referring to future reviews and increasing annual spending for flood protection to £800 million by 2010/ 2011, demonstrated the lack of urgency at the heart of government regarding climate change. Recent events demonstrate the violent way in which nature can turn.

The threat now faced by the planet can either be seriously addressed or the type of devastation caused by the floods in the north and Midlands recently will become commonplace. The crisis is upon us, there is no longer the opportunity to wait for five, 10 or 20 years to deal with the problem. Make no mistake, it is global warming that is the real threat facing humanity, not terrorism.

The mindset of government and much of the country still seems to be that if we recycle a few newspapers, use the car a bit less and don't use the standby switch on our TVs all will be well. No doubt these moves will make a difference, but the crisis has moved a long way beyond making such minor genuflections at sustainability.

To address climate change properly there needs to be a real lifestyle change. This will mean returning to a virtual village type existence with local production of foodstuffs and energy sources like electricity and water. Use of car and aircraft journeys will have to be severely curtailed. New houses will have to be environmentally sustainable and existing premises updated to meet the criteria. There needs to be a major re-examination of the whole concept of globalisation at an international level.

The biggest polluters on earth come from the so-called developed world. Americans do the most damage, followed closely by the Europeans and Japanese. The average US citizen is responsible for putting 20 kilos of carbon into the air each year compared to just five kilos from Chinese citizens. By comparison, the developing countries like India and Pakistan do much less damage to the planet but will increasingly do more as they aspire to become major industrialised nations. As many commentators have pointed out, more than one planet of resources is required if everyone were to live like most Americans or Europeans do.

The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that globalisation in its present devastating form is incompatible with saving the planet. Something will have to give. To retain a naive belief in a technological fix that will enable life to continue as before is unrealistic. The danger will be that major nations will not take the threat seriously. The Americans seem only likely to engage with the global warming agenda if it can be used as a means of trade protection for its own markets. There will need to be a concerted effort if nations like America are to come on board.

The Church can play a vital role in this debate. The environment is most certainly a life issue and should be given a greater precedence on that agenda. It is time for some bold pronouncements from the hierarchy on issues like stewardship of the earth and our responsibility for all life. The Live Simply campaign points the way to how people should now be living their lives. The Church could also point the way itself by investing in sustainable technology like solar panels. Parish priests could encourage congregations not to use their cars to come to church. Priests could also get informed and start talking about the issues from the pulpit. These are just a few ways that the Church could contribute to a more sustainable future.

The Church needs to become pro-active in arguing for a more sustainable approach to the planet. Failure to make the necessary moves to bring about a more sustainable world could see a return to the law of the jungle. The sight of people panic buying water and emptying supermarkets shows how close society can come to anarchy. The ease with which looting and riots develop in situations like that caused by Hurricane Katrina in America further show how thin the veneer of civility is. Failure to seriously address the challenges of climate change now will store up real danger for the future of the planet — the recent floods provide a real wake up call. #

19th August 2007 Congregation flock to hear birdsong

PEOPLE visited Clifton Cathedral in Bristol recently for a unique event. Well known for its superb choir, the cathedral attracted people who wanted to hear a different form of song, that created by the birds of nearby Worcester Terrace Gardens. Chris Sperring, the top naturalist and broadcaster who is the conservation officer for the Hawk and Owl Trust, guided the congregation as they listened to and identified birdsong. There was time to reflect on the natural world before Mass was celebrated in the cathedral at 6pm.

Chris said: "The well-being of the human being is surrounded by the well-being of the natural world. "No species lives in isolation and that includes us. Birdsong reflects the health, wealth and well-being of our environment. Sometimes there is too much talking and too little experiencing. "By allowing ourselves to be immersed in the sounds, sights and smells of the natural world it can help us think about our place in nature."

Clifton Cathedral parishioner Mary Colwell, who organised the event, said: "Catholicism believes we can find God in all things. "By letting nature infiltrate our hectic lives we can find new and enriching ways to experience God." #

19th August 2007 Climate change challenge for congregations

ENVIRONMENTAL specialist and Columban priest Fr Sean McDonagh has called on religious congregations to educate themselves and take an active role in combating climate change. Fr McDonagh called for more ecological theology in Catholic schools, seminaries and theological institutes.

"One cannot presume that Catholics or Catholic missionaries are well informed about the reality and future challenge of climate change unless there is an education campaign at every level of the Catholic Church," said Fr McDonagh, who called for congregations that have representation at the United Nations to lobby for the ethical dimension of climate change in the UN process.

"On the practical side, religious should also undertake a carbon audit on their property, vehicles and ministries and begin the process of reducing their carbon footprint. "They should set realistic goals and encourage other organisations within the Catholic community to take similar steps. "The challenges posed by

global warming and climate change can provide an opportunity to build a more peaceful, just and sustain-able human society. "But time is running out. We need to act now or future generations will not forgive us," said Fr McDonagh.
#

26th August 2007 Terror laws are taking away the right to peaceful protest

By Paul Donovan

THE efforts of the British Airports Authority (BAA) to stop climate change protesters at Heathrow airport has resulted in a massive public relations own-goal. A protest that would no doubt have made headlines for a couple of days has come to dominate the national media agenda over re-cent weeks.

The first mistake from BAA's perspective was in seeking to get a wide-ranging injunction to stop the protest. This brought forth protest over the on-going effort to cut back on civil liberties. The injunction was granted but in a very limited form; not the incredible banning order that BAA sought that would have included groups like the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust.

The protest though, having grabbed the nation's attention, has been steadily growing. The cause of cutting the use of aircraft travel in order to reduce global warming has wide sympathy in the community at large. Protesters have been drawn in from across the country. There have also been many locals joining, concerned about the welfare of their homes and villages if another runway is built at Heathrow.

The protest is in the main made up of articulate, concerned people from every generation, but there have of course been the cries from some about hard-line protesters who may be prepared to stop at nothing, including occupying runways and using violent means, to achieve their aims. The police are always quick to conjure up this picture of a dangerous group of hard-liners who seem to materialise out of thin air whenever a major protest takes place.

It then seems an increasingly short step in today's intolerant world from hard-line protester to potential terrorist. The Metropolitan Police have not been slow to make the link, openly admitting to using anti-terror powers against protesters. They justify the use of these powers on the basis that "the presence of large numbers of protesters at or near the airport will reduce our ability to proactively counter the terrorist act [threat]."

The terrorism powers include stop and search of people and vehicles even if they do not have evidence to suspect them and the power to hold people for 28 days and to search homes and remove protesters' outer clothes, such as hats, shoes and coats. The use of the terror threat to cut legitimate rights to protest is nothing new. A couple of years ago, terror laws were used against pro-testers outside an arms exhibition in London.

Previously in 2003, police used Terrorism Act stop and search powers some 995 times against peace protesters at RAF Fairford. It is difficult not to think that this effort to criminalise legitimate protest has its roots in a malfunctioning democracy that does not really want to listen to people. The response of the government to the one million-plus anti war protesters who came out in February 2003 was to ignore them and press on with an illegal war. The anti-war march is the best example, but what of other conventional means? Letter writing seems to have a limited effect.

Then there are the government's farcical consultations which take evidence over a set time frame only to usually completely ignore the views gathered and push ahead with the original proposals. There is a growing discontent in the country that the government, whatever its political colour, is simply there to serve big business and vested interests. They are managers of the masses for the interests of the few.

The space in which legitimate protest takes place is clearly under threat. When traditional means of democratic negotiation fail then protest turns to peaceful, non-violent direct action. This form of protest has a proud tradition stretching back through the anti-road movement, the 1960s and 70s civil rights protests in Northern Ireland, the Greenham Common Women and the suffragettes. Recent actions indicate a clear move afoot to criminalise such protest.

What BAA, the government and police need to realise is that protest will not go away but simply take another form. If peaceful direct action fails, then some people turn to more violent means. It would be the ultimate irony if in seeking to use the terror threat to stop legitimate protest, the likes of BAA actually brought on a far more violent form of dissent. The real answer, of course, is to listen to the legitimate protests of citizens and act accordingly. This is called democracy and it would certainly be worth giving it another try in this country.
#

The Catholic Herald

25th May 2007

Amazon jungle has 30 years left, says bishop

From Barbara Fraser in Aparecida, Brazil

IN A PLEA for all countries to join forces to stop the destruction of the rain forest, a bishop from Brazil has claimed "it's five minutes to midnight" for the Amazon jungle. German-born Bishop Erwin Krautler of Xingu, in northern Para state, told a press conference that when he arrived in the region 42 years ago the Amazon was more or less intact. "Now it is threatened with destruction," he said.

Clearing and burning the rain forest to plant soy and sugar cane "will be a fatal blow for the Amazon", he said. "If things continue as they are, in another 30 years the Amazon will not exist any more." Destruction of the rain forest has accelerated since the 1970s with the construction of highways that have given ranchers, loggers and miners access to untouched land.

Environmental issues have been high on the Brazilian Catholic Church's agenda in recent years. Many activists, including Bishop Krautler, have reportedly received death threats for their campaigns to save the rain forest. Some campaigners, such as American Sister Dorothy Stang, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, have been killed. Bishop Krautler's plea to save the rain forest came less than a week after a rancher was sentenced to 30 years in prison for hiring gunmen to kill Sister Dorothy in 2005., ,

The rain forest is home to indigenous peoples, rubber tappers and settlers who moved there in the 1970s "in search of a place where they could plant and harvest and make a living with their families", Bishop Krautler said. Defence of the Amazon "is not only defence of the flora and fauna", he explained. "From the standpoint of creation theology, when we defend the Amazon, we are defending the home of future generations. We are defending creation as a whole."

Observers have said that the newest threat to the region is the widespread planting of sugar cane to produce ethanol. Brazil is already a leading producer of ethanol, and President Luiz Inacio Lula Silva has said he wants to increase production and help African countries follow Brazil's example. US resident George W Bush and Mr da Silva signed an agreement to promote ethanol production in March.

The Brazilian bishops expressed concern about the plan in a statement earlier this month. Noting that in today's world "business takes precedence, without concern for its social and ecological costs", the bishops said that this push "cannot be done to the detriment of the ecological balance., agrarian reform and food security," or in violation of human rights.

Bishop Krautler said: "We may as well chant a requiem for the Amazon if we don't take a stand against this threat." He said that Brazil ran the risk of "becoming a huge sugar cane field because of ethanol".

Because rain forest soil is poor in nutrients, when the trees are cleared and the ecological balance is destroyed it turns into a vast, relatively infertile plain, Bishop Krautler said. This has already happened because of the clearing of forest for ranching and soy farming, he said. #

1st June 2007

I have had enough of this silly Green apocalypse

Robin Aitken calls for a bracing dose of Catholic optimism to combat global fanaticism

Happy the person serenely oblivious of, or untroubled by, this global warming thing; for most of us, bludgeoned by a maximum volume media panic, it has become one of those issues where not to have an opinion suggests intellectual backsliding. Haven't you been listening? We're all doomed. And yet there's a problem. On the one hand, here we all are, humankind, traveling on this planetary Ark, with no lifeboats and a rate of climate change' that supposedly threatens our collective future. The moral responsibility of each of us is surely clear: we must all do everything we can to arrest global warming. That will involve a bit more than recycling a few plastic bottles; fully enacted, the most drastic prescriptions would involve significant economic sacrifice and, perhaps, a much less comfortable future.

On the other hand, suppose the predictions about climate change are wrong? Some weeks ago Channel 4 broadcast The Great Global Warming Swindle, which caused a great fuss. The programme was denounced by many for whom global warming has become an article of faith and yet, for those of us who are not fully committed to either side of the debate, it seemed to raise valid arguments which contradict the global warming orthodoxy. In particular it challenged the notion that global warming is largely a function of the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and that this level is determined by human activity; it made a powerful case for a contrary interpretation in which rising mean temperatures are the result, mainly, of increased solar activity. As sunspot activity is cyclical all we have to do, maybe, is to sit out a few hot summers and learn to adapt to the new conditions.

For one certain consequence of the debate swirling around us is that the climate turns out not to be the solid, dependable thing we once imagined it to be. The climate is constantly changing, and has always done so. Previous generations have had to cope with severe climate change: in Greenland, there were thriving Viking settlements for hundreds of years until, in the 12th and 13th centuries, the climate turned colder and

Greenland was abandoned. So clearly there were times when the earth was significantly warmer than it is today. This puts the reasonably interested, reasonably well-informed person in a quandary

Personally speaking, I have come to a point where I accept a number of things as proven; and some which are not. It is, I think, indisputable that global mean temperatures are rising: all those thermometer readings do not lie. And, yes, carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas and the greenhouse effect is a real (and vital) natural phenomenon. The second category is much more problematical because it involves a crucial judgment about the extent to which human activity is responsible. Here there are competing claims; most climate scientists (at least those corralled into the Inter-national Panel on Climate Change) argue that man is mainly responsible - but there is a scattering of reputable scientific dissidents who have come to different conclusions.

The common-sense position for the layman confronted by impassioned scientific debate is to sit it out. Would that it were so simple. A detached, agnostic, position on global warming is becoming an increasingly precarious perch. In Britain, the consensus lining up behind the orthodoxy is formidable. All the main political parties now unquestioningly accept that global warming is the result of greenhouse gas emissions. The BBC is fully on board and no longer feels the need to balance its output; *bien pensant* opinion is signed up, so that it just makes life easier to pay lip-service to the global warming lobby.

Mild scepticism now carries risks: I deeply offended an old friend recently by suggesting that the case for man-made global warming is not yet proven beyond all dispute. But it's getting to the point where even to ask sceptical questions is just not done: any dissent, even if moderately expressed, is viewed as a sign of insufficient commitment to an overriding moral imperative. And it is the vehemence of the global warming fanatics wherein danger lies. A hysterical consensus, deeply pessimistic about the likely course of global warming, is driving political decision-making in ways that will affect us all, but will bear hardest upon the world's poorest people.

It has become a cliché to say that the environmentalist movement has taken on aspects of religion, but clichés often encapsulate truth. The Green narrative is a religious scenario – but doom-laden and joyless, unleavened by hope. Here, for instance, is how the scientist James Lovelock, a revered figure among environmentalists, ends his new book *The Revenge of Gaia*: " Meanwhile in the hot, arid world survivors gather for the journey to the new arctic centres of civilisation: I see them in the desert as the dawn breaks and the sun throws its piercing gaze across the horizon at the camp. The cool, fresh night air lingers for a while and then, like smoke, dissipates as the heat takes charge. Their camel wakes, blinks and slowly rises on her haunches. The few remaining members of the tribe mount. She belches and sets off on the long, unbearably hot journey to the next oasis."

For me this prompts mirth rather than anguish; perhaps it's that belching camel, but this is a banal kind of apocalypse. Lovelock, who dreamt up the Gaia theory, in which the world operates as a kind of super organism, believes that billions will die by the end of this century because of climate change. Pessimism runs through the DNA of the Green movement – there's an unholy glee about the way in which they fling their jeremiads at the rest of us. What is often missing from their account is the way in which degraded eco-systems come back to life given half a chance; nature (and mankind) usually proves to be far more robust than many Greens imagine - but that kind of optimism doesn't fit the storyline.

The rest of us could take this in an "all the fun of the fair" kind of way; but, for Catholics, there's a darker side to the environmentalist creed. Ideas of population control pervade its thinking and in international forums the need to reduce world population is a common trope.

On the wilder shores of Greenery some very odd beliefs indeed thrive, like the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, whose founder Les U Knight believes that only by eradicating ourselves can the planet (that vengeful old Gaia!) be returned to a state of grace. In this vision mankind walks off into the sunset leaving the planet to be enjoyed by the birds and the bees. Mr Knight is clearly a fundamentalist, but the idea of human beings as pestilential underlies much Green thinking. And if it ever became generally accepted that mankind itself is the problem, who knows what horrors might be unleashed?

What is urgently needed is an effort by the Church to bring sanity to the environmental debate and deliver it from the godless utilitarians who have made it their special preserve. There are signs that this is already happening: in April there was a conference in the Vatican devoted to climate change. And the message that emanated from it was that the Church is more engaged than ever before with environmental problems; there could be a papal encyclical on the matter. It can't come too soon. A bracing dose of Catholic optimism, grounded in the belief of a loving Creator, but which recognises that man's steward-ship of creation is a moral obligation, would chase away the dark phantasms conjured up by the defeatists who currently hold centre stage.

Robin Aitken, a former senior BBC reporter, is the author of Can We Trust the BBC?, published by Continuum #

8th June 1997

Time to take on the environmentalist creed

From the director of the department for pastoral affairs of the Diocese of Westminster

SIR – It was edifying to see the view of Robin Aitken (Comment, June 1), especially as he highlights the issue of language and its use; in this case, to instil despair rather than hope for the future. His point about the "darker side to the environmentalist creed" is highly significant and one to which Catholics should pay heed. We could do no better than to access the revelatory work of - Mgr Michel Schooyans, *The Human Face of Terrorism*. Unfortunately the book is not yet available in English but I would invite anyone who wants to be informed and reflect on the nature of the moral spectre haunting our global organisations in the name of "rights" to avail themselves of this book and offer to assist in any way for an English translation.

Yours faithfully, **EDMUND ADAMUS London SW1**

From Mr Otto Marre

SIR - Having taken a keen interest in the subject of global warming from a very young age, I was delighted to read Robin Aitken's piece. He revisits the idea that environmentalism is fast becoming a secular religion. Although the world may be getting hotter, I'd suggest, however, that the current manifestation of the green fury is more fairly likened to an authoritarian political regimen than anything in the spiritual realm. Fascism, perhaps.

Yours faithfully, **OTTO X W MARRE London W11**

From Miss Eliza Ascott

SIR – I was very pleased to read Robin Aitken's well-balanced piece on green fanaticism. I don't think I have ever read such a good article on climate change.

While he successfully dismissed green fanatics, Mr Aitken refused to support the fogleish assumptions of those who believe that global warming argument is utter rubbish.

Like Mr Aitken, I, too, have offended some of my oldest friends by - suggesting that the case for man-made climate change is not as concrete as the BBC and the Government would have us believe. It seems that it is anathema to even think against the grain of the Left-leaning consensus on the need to save mother earth. Yet in recent days I have grown tired of the anti-Green bores, who mouth-off endlessly about "eco-facism" in complete ignorance of the scientific arguments on either side of the debate.

Yours faithfully, **ELIZA ASCOTT By e-mail**

From Mr Giles Erulin

SIR –As a scare-mongering green, I took offence at being dismissed as a fanatic by Robin Aitken.

Those of us who are desperately worried about the future of this planet are not "conjuring up dark phantasms", but frantically trying to point out that man is causing catastrophic damage to the environment.

We are not waving, but drowning.

Yours faithfully, **GILES ERULIN York**

22nd June 2007

Slaughtering rabbits

From the general secretary of-Catholic Concern for Animals

SIR – The title of Channel 4's Monday night programme on the Chavagnes college, *A Dangerous School for Boys*, was spot on. Morally dangerous – for does the Principal not know that cruelty to animals is a sin? Bishop Bellord's catechism of 1901 calls it "a very cowardly and disgraceful sin". To require children to slaughter rabbits and in such clumsy, cruel and unnecessary ways, is nothing short of child abuse. This school must be closed.

Yours faithfully, **DEBORAH JONES Cheltenham, Glos**

17th August 2007

Were the floods a punishment from God?

Notebook - Fr Sean McDonagh

Last month's devastating floods in parts of Wales and England prompted various responses. The

Anglican Bishop of Carlisle, the Rt Rev Graham Dow, argued that the floods were God's judgment on contemporary moral decadence. According to him, we are reaping the consequence of our moral degradation, as well as the environmental damage that we have

caused. Most religious leaders would be uncomfortable with such judgments for a number of reasons. First, the people affected are usually not those who led decadent lives or who have contributed to climate change. Secondly, the picture of God which it portrays is far removed from the image of Abba which is revealed in the words and teaching of Jesus.

Others commentators blamed, global warming. Dr. Malcolm Haylock, formerly of the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit, says that while you can say that, due to the earth getting warmer, there will be on average more extreme weather events, you cannot attribute any specific event to climate change. For

example, the single most destructive climate event in Ireland during the past five centuries took place on January 6-7, 1839. It has become known as "the Night of the Big Wind". More than 300 people lost their lives and damage to property was severe right across the country. It took place at the beginning of the millennial cycle, so this storm cannot be attributed to, clue chap. It is interesting to note that preachers at the time also interpreted that event as a sign that the end of the world was near. Some wisps were changed!

The fact that we cannot link any single climate event to global warming does not mean that the climate changes we have witnessed around the world in the past decade are not due to human activity. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution humans have been burning fossil fuels and increasing the percentage of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. As carbon dioxide levels rise the Earth's atmosphere heats up because solar radiation, which is being dissipated into space, is captured by gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. As the

average global temperature begins to rise the earth enters a phase of extreme weather patterns. Severe storms and rainfall patterns which until recently

happened only once every hundred years, will now happen possibly every five or 10 years. A warming of the atmosphere will lead to a rise in ocean levels, affecting millions of people who live in areas such as Bangladesh. The glaciers on the Himalayas are beginning to melt, with potentially devastating consequences for the two billion people whose lives depend on the meltwaters.

Given the fact that the 2,500 scientists associated with the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change are convinced that human activity is causing climate change many environmentalists were dismayed that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace invited climate change sceptics to a Vatican conference in April.

But recently more positive signals have been coming from Rome. Two weeks ago Vatican City announced plans to become the first "carbon-neutral state" by planting trees in Hungary's Buick National Park. The Vatican also plans to generate electricity by putting photovoltaic panels on the roof of Pope Paul VI's audience hall. I hope that dioceses, parishes and religious houses around the world will follow suit and demonstrate to the world that the Catholic Church is taking climate change — one of the most critical moral issues of our time — seriously.

Fr Sean McDonagh SCC is the author of Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us (Columba Press, £9.50) #

Daily Mail

29th May 2007

The secret plan to turn us all veggie

SECRET plans to encourage the nation to give up eating meat are being examined by the Government to help save the planet. A leaked e-mail expresses sympathy for the environmental benefits of a mass switch to a vegan diet - a strict form of vegetarianism which bans milk, dairy products and fish. The change would need to be done 'gently' because of a 'risk of alienating the public', according to the document. The extreme policy is being examined on the basis it could make a major contribution to slowing climate change.

Farm animals are blamed for producing huge amounts of the greenhouse gases methane and carbon dioxide. However, the National Farmers' Union has ridiculed the idea as 'simplistic'. The e-mail, sent to a vegetarian campaign group, comes from an official at the Environment Agency, a Government advisory body. It states: 'The potential benefit of a vegan diet in terms of climate impact could be very significant.'

However, it does recognise that it would be very difficult to win public support for such a move. Consequently, it says the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is looking to encourage a gradual change that would be more palatable to the general public.

The e-mail states: 'It will be a case of introducing this gently as there is a risk of alienating the public majority.' The official goes on to say it is 'unlikely' that the Environment Agency would ever suggest adopting a fully vegan lifestyle. But the e-mail added: 'Certainly encouraging people to examine their consumption of animal protein could be a key message.'

The proposals are the latest in a raft of measures being promoted as helping to slow climate change. Others include putting windmills on rooftops, driving electric cars and banning plastic bags. The e-mail was sent to the campaigning vegetarian organisation Viva, which argues that it is more efficient to use land to grow crops for humans, rather than feeding them to farm animals and dairy cows.

Viva director Juliet Gellatley said: 'I think it is extraordinary that a Government agency thinks becoming a vegetarian or vegan could have such a positive impact for the environment yet it is not prepared to stand up and argue the case. There is a growing awareness that our diet directly affects the world around us - and that vegetarians and vegans contribute far less to the destruction of

the environment. For our planet's sake there is an urgent need to move away from a meat and dairy-obsessed Western diet.'

NFU communications chief Anthony Gibson rejected these claims as 'simplistic and flawed'. 'This is not a black and white issue,' he said. 'You have to look at how these crops are produced in terms of the energy used for growing and transport.' s.poulter@dailymail.co.uk

The Catholic Times

13th May 2007

Live simply to save planet, says nuncio

By Dennis Sadowski

EVERY Catholic can do something about climate change by adopting a life of voluntary simplicity, the Vatican's UN nuncio believes. It can come down to what is commonly referred to in the United States as voluntary simplicity, or "working less, wanting less, spending less", thus reducing the impact each person has on the environment, Archbishop Celestino Migliore told participants gathered in Columbus, Ohio, for the second in a series of regional Catholic conversations on climate change.

Citing Genesis' call to humanity to oversee creation while protecting it and the Church's social doctrine, the Vatican diplomat outlined the Holy See's position on the need for Catholics to heed the environmental dangers the planet faces. "The degradation of the environment has become an inescapable reality" the archbishop said. "There is no doubt that the latest assessment has established a strong connection between human activity and climate change," he said, referring to a February statement by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Archbishop Migliore acknowledged that although not all scientists agree that climate change is occurring, other environmental threats such as indiscriminate deforestation, water pollution, the lack of potable water in many parts of the world and the depletion of fish stocks demand action from the world community and individual Catholics alike. "We need to drink deep from this fascinating foundation of knowledge and wisdom, known as the aggressive and progressive degradation of the environment, that has become an inescapable reality," he said.

Archbishop Migliore called God's placing of humans in the Garden of Eden with the instruction not only to tame nature, but to keep, or preserve, it as well. God's instruction was not so much a commandment but a blessing "to perfect, not destroy, the cosmos", he said. Any steps to protect the environment must depend on more than the use of technology and traditional economics; they must depend on "ethical, social and religious values as well", he said.

Likewise, any corrective steps require turning to people in the developing world, especially those living in dire poverty, and making decisions with their advice and consent, the papal nuncio said. "With humans open to love, creation becomes the place for the mutual exchange of gifts among people," he said.

The Ohio conference was the second of three gatherings being held across the US to address the Catholic response to climate change. The first was in Florida in March and the third will be on June 2 in Anchorage, Alaska. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops is convening representatives from across a broad spectrum of society for a thorough discussion on climate change. The latest conference reflected that desire by involving representatives from utility companies, a consumer group, environmental organisations, agriculture, higher education, state government, local parishes and diocesan social action offices. Dan Misleh, executive director of the ten-month-old Catholic Coalition on Climate Change and a conference planner, said the bishops are looking for steps that "make sense" and that are consistent with Catholic values. #

20th May 2007

Human indifference threatens change

Science -Agneta Sutton

THE third part of the 2007 report on climate change, prepared by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and published in Bangkok on May 4, spells out how humankind might curb global warming. According to the report, entitled Mitigation of Climate Change, mankind has the know-how to limit, if not stop, global warming. But the question is: Are we willing and capable of making a concerted effort to do so?

With a concerted effort, human-kind would be able to limit the average global temperature rise within the next two decades to 2-3 degrees Celsius. But, of course, that would require a major effort and many sacrifices. It could be done, but at a cost, not least a financial cost. Sadly, given the unlikelihood of a sustained and concerted effort involving rapidly developing countries like China and India as well as industrially developed countries, it seems, however, unrealistic to expect too achieve this much.

Yet something less ambitious could be done to curb carbon dioxide and other greenhouse-gas emissions and thus avoid ever rising temperatures – or ever accelerating temperature rises.

The IPCC report suggests a number of measures which, if implemented, would curb global warming. One of them is nuclear energy, which is suggested as at least a short to medium-term solution until other cheaper and cleaner forms of renewable energy are found. Not popular with many of the greens, this is a solution favoured by many scientists, among them James Lovelock. Lovelock is 'inventor' of the Gaia theory, the theory that the earthly biosphere works like an integrated organism seeking to maintain its own metabolic balance.

Another form of energy, one that is renewable, but not welcomed by all from an aesthetic point of view is the use windmills to produce electric energy. You see many of them in Denmark, a low-lying flat and

windswept country. They make sense for the Danes who have no oil or coal and no big rivers to use for the generation of electric energy. In Sweden, on the other hand, much of the country's electricity is river-water generated. The same is true of British Columbia in Canada, which is supplying not only itself but also parts of the United States with water generated electricity. Waves coming in from the sea might likewise be used for the purpose of generating electricity. Many parts of the world could take advantage of this.

But in order to curb global warming we need to consider not only other means of energy than those releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, such as coal and oil generated electricity. We need to curb emissions of carbon dioxide by other means as well. We need cleaner cars, cars that run on electricity produced by clean means or cars that run on bio-fuel. But beware! We do not want all our fields to be used for the production of bio-fuel. We need food as well. Thus the IPCC suggests the production of bio-fuel made from cellulose and other waste. The IPCC also suggests the development of better means of public transport to limit the number of cars on the roads, since the use of cars is the fastest growing source of emission.

However, it is the industrial sector that presents the biggest challenge. It is here we could make the biggest cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions. Emissions of major industrial pollutants, such as methane and nitrous oxide, should be regulated and put under strict control. The same applies to chemicals such as HFCs and PFCs. Industries should be encouraged to avail of the latest green technologies in order to be energy efficient.

The IPCC also recommends the use of energy efficient building materials both in industrial buildings and in private housing. Germany and Switzerland are held up as examples in this regard. Both countries have strict building codes. In temperate climates, much heat is lost through poorly insulated walls, roofs and draughty windows. We must reduce the consumption of energy to keep warm. And we must reduce the consumption of energy to keep cool by means of air conditioning combined with poor insulation.

Conservation of carbon stores, such as tropical forests, is also important if we want to limit climate change. Illegal deforestation is a problem in many parts of the world, as is unscrupulous but legal deforestation. Ethical and efficient land and forestry management must be encouraged. Richer parts of the world must play a more active role in helping and encouraging poorer countries to conserve their forests both for the sake of the economic future of their own populations and for the sake of us all. International financial assistance may be called for in order to stop reckless deforestation in some parts of the world.

Good waste management is also called for. Some waste may be used to reclaim energy. 'Recycle and minimise waste', rather than 'use once and throw-away' is the motto.

Finally, it may be noted that the Vatican too has added its voice to the call for efforts to preserve the world for future generations. On April 26 the Vatican housed a conference at which Pope Benedict XVI himself called for measures to mitigate climate change. #

20th May 2007

Warming to hit poor hardest

By Bill Wavers

GLOBAL warming is not just an environmental issue but must be seen in "ethical, economic, social and political terms as well", Archbishop Celestino Migliore told a gathering of high-ranking development officials at the United Nations.

The Vatican nuncio's statement to the international body warned that global warming and energy shortages could have a disproportionate effect on the world's poor.

"The consequences of climate change . . . will impact first and foremost the poorest and weakest who, even if they are among the least responsible for global warming, are the most vulnerable because they have limited resources or live in areas at greater risk," he said. "Many of the most vulnerable societies, already facing energy problems, rely upon agriculture, the very sector most likely to suffer from climatic shifts."

Archbishop Migliore spoke during the 15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development of the UN Economic and Social Council. The theme of the meeting was Turning Political Commitments Into Action, Working

Together in Partnership.

Also addressing the commission were high-ranking officials of the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation, Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, World Health Organisation, International Energy Agency and other international bodies. Senior government officials or representatives of more than two dozen nations also spoke.

"Ultimately, the earth is our common heritage and we have a grave and far-reaching responsibility to ourselves and to future generations for the actions we are due to take here," Archbishop Migliore said, adding that "the need for joint action at the international level does not lessen the responsibility of individual states".

Abdalla Salem el-Badri, secretary-general of OPEC, told the UN session that energy demand is projected to increase more than 50 per cent by 2030, requiring an estimated \$20 trillion in cumulative investment.

A "common, global, long-term energy strategy" must be "capable of satisfying legitimate short and medium-term energy requirements, ensuring energy security, protecting human health and the environment, and establishing precise commitments to address the question of climate change", Archbishop Migliore said. #

27th May 2007

How can a dog predict an earthquake?

Science - Agneta Sutton

WHEN reading the Sunday newspapers the day after the earthquake in Folkestone on Saturday, April 28, one thing that caught my attention - apart from the devastation caused and the misery inflicted on some people - was the behaviour of a dog. According to its owner, Rosemary Burdy, her dog Mickey had started barking just before the quake struck. "I have never seen him so scared. He was cowering. Then there was a great crash as the chimney came down," she said. It is not surprising that the dog was scared if it sensed the earth-quake. But what is interesting is that it seemed to have sensed the quake in advance of its happening.

This brings to mind a fact, to which the animal researcher Rupert Sheldrake drew attention in *The Ecologist* of March 2005. His paper was entitled: Listen to the animals: Why did so many animals escape the December tsunami? It discussed why so many animals escaped the terrible Asian Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. "Elephants in Sri Lanka and Sumatra moved to high ground before the giant waves struck; they did the same in Thailand, trumpeting before they did so," he wrote. Buffalo, goats and dogs also ran to the hill tops, he noted. And in Sri Lanka dog owners were surprised by their dogs who refused to go for their usual morning walk on the beach that day. In some places the behaviour of the animals even saved human life. Tribal groups took the behaviour of the animals as a sign and followed them up the hills to safety.

The interesting thing about Sheldrake's article is that he disputes the common hypothesis that animals can pick up tremors by hearing or the like before they are noticed by humans. The reason Sheldrake is not convinced by this explanation is simple. He asks: "If animals can predict earthquake-related disasters by sensing slight tremors, why can't seismologists do so?" Sheldrake's question is pertinent, all the more so as many animals seem able to sense an earthquake many hours, sometimes even days, before it happens.

Sheldrake, who is interested in extra-sensory perception, has undertaken many experiments and written numerous articles about the behaviour of dogs, articles in which he shows that dogs seem to know when their owners are on the way home after having been out for the day. Indeed, in his book *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home*, he describes how during the Second World War many British and German families relied on their pets' behaviour to warn them of an impending air raid before official warnings were given. He claims that some dogs even anticipated the German V-2 rockets, which they certainly could not have heard in advance since they were supersonic.

In other words, Sheldrake argues that animals have a premonition of disaster, be they avalanches, earthquakes or air raids. He castigates Western scientists for ignoring this phenomenon or trying to explain it away as superstitious belief. Noting that "Chinese scientists have an impressive record of predicting earthquakes ... saving thousands of lives", Sheldrake argues that we should follow the example of China, where since the 1970s the authorities have encouraged people to report unusual animal behaviour.

Indeed, Sheldrake is calling for a global animal earthquake alert system. He says millions of pet owners worldwide might be asked to take part in such a scheme.

If owners of animals noticed signs of unusual behaviour and of fear and anxiety, they might report it via a telephone hotline or send a message on the internet. If there were an unusual number of calls from a certain area this would then sound an alarm. But let us return to the question of how animals can tell future events. According to Sheldrake, in the case of dogs and dog owners, we are probably dealing with a kind of telepathy.

In his article *Testing a Return - Anticipating Dog*, Kane, published in *Anthrozoos*, 13(4), 2000, Sheldrake writes: "If the possibility of telepathy is admitted, then the simplest and most straightforward explanation is that dogs themselves are responding to their owners directly." To his mind, then, the dogs respond telepathically to the thoughts of their owners when on their way home.

As for the ability of animals to foretell a disaster, Sheldrake has, however, no explanation. He admits that no one knows how animals can sense an earthquake in advance or know about an impending avalanche or anticipate an air raid. Yet it would seem that there are numerous examples of this kind of ability. And it is not restricted to a few specific species with a unique sense of smell or hearing. To be sure, it is impossible to pinpoint a special sense and say that it explains the extraordinary ability of animals to predict events such as earthquakes. #

10th June 2007

So many will suffer if we neglect the environment

LIVE simply to save planet' (The Catholic Times, May 13) reports on Archbishop Celestino Migliore's comments that each person should live a little more simply to reduce their harmful impact on the environment. If we neglect the environment then people suffer. For instance, government statistics show that 24,000 early UK deaths a year are caused by traffic pollution.

US evangelicals are pressing for stronger environmental protection for unborn babies as toxic pollution, such as mercury, from waste dumps is a threat to foetuses. A paper from The Centre for American Progress showed that man-made chemicals increase rates of endometriosis, miscarriage, premature birth and birth defects.

This needs action by governments and industry. The EU's REACH project will investigate toxic chemicals, because thousands are allowed in common usage, which were never properly tested to see if they cause cancer. Breast, testicular and prostate cancers have risen several-fold. UK breast cancer rates were 25,000 a year in the 1980s. This has now risen to 41,000 UK cases a year.

Oestrogen-mimic chemicals from plastics and pesticides can disrupt hormones. Dioxins from incinerators and benzene, which is added to petrol, are proven to cause cancer and birth defects. When we allow preventable illness we break Jesus' command to love each other.

A Wills, Ruislip, Middlesex

5th August 2007

Going green is step on path to morality

By Cindy Wooden

POPE BENEDICT XVI believes ecology could hold the key to teaching young people about Christian morality. The papal intuition is sparked by the fact that ecology is a widely accepted moral concern, but one that points much deeper: Nature itself teaches that some things are naturally right and some are naturally wrong. Appropriately, Pope Benedict had Alpine peaks and meadows as a backdrop when he added the environmental twist to his oft-repeated call for a moral education of the young based on a recognition of natural law.

When a priest in northern Italy asked him on July 24 for suggestions on how to educate the moral conscience of the young, the Pope began with a rather philosophical explanation of conscience and natural law. In the Christian view, the natural moral code is not an arbitrary list of dos and don'ts thought up by religious leaders or resulting from a majority vote, but is part of human nature and the result of being created by God, the Pope said. Humans are special creatures precisely because they have the ability "to listen to the voice of the Creator and, in this way, know what is good and what is bad".

In helping people understand the natural moral law, the Pope said, the first step is to help them recognise that within themselves there is "a moral message, a divine message, which must be deciphered" and obeyed. More concretely, "I would propose a combination between a secular way and a religious way, the way of faith", he said, before launching his new idea.

"Everyone today can see that man could destroy the foundation of his existence – his earth – and, therefore, we can no longer simply use this earth, this reality entrusted to us, to do what we want or what appears useful and promising at the moment, but we must respect the inherent laws of creation," the Pope said. People must "learn these laws and obey these laws if we want to survive," he said.

The destruction of the environment, the Pope said, is a stark example of how future survival requires that people obey the laws of nature, especially when everyone else is taking shortcuts that may increase their pleasure at the moment, but are obviously damaging in the long term. The first thing young people can learn is that "our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive", the Pope said.

Pope Benedict said it might not be that great of a reach to help young people understand that the same natural voice telling them littering is bad, clear-cutting a forest is a shame, and that water and clean air are precious resources is really saying that life is precious. "We must not only care for the earth, but we must respect one another," he said. "Only with absolute respect for this creature of God, this image of God which is man, only with respect for living together on this earth can we move forward."

Pope Benedict said that once people understand human freedom involves the entire human community and not just what one individual feels like doing at any one time they can be led to see how the Ten Commandments also are expressions of truth about human nature and about the regulations needed for living together on this earth.

The Pope said priests should try to use "the obvious paths" opened up by secular moral concerns, such as ecology, to lead Christian young people to "the true voice of the con-science", which is communicated in Catholic moral teaching. "Through a journey of patient education, I think we can all learn to live and to find true life;" he said. #

Church of England Newspaper

31st August 2007

Putting animal rights on the agenda

By Louise Clark

We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals - Immanuel Kant

The amount of suffering that animals endure is vast. This is mainly inflicted by human beings or is the effect of human activity. But does this abuse of animals lead to further violence against human beings? As God's creatures in their own right, should animals be used as a means for preventing violence against human beings?

Those who subscribe to any religious faith, but particularly Christianity, in which a loving God is at the core, will need to acknowledge that animals are part of creation which matters to the creator. Animals suffer in so many ways from individual pet abuse to the mass breeding of 35 million pheasants for sport, from bears kept in tiny cages milked for their bile to the annual 'disappearance' of thousands of greyhounds involved in the racing industry.

The fur trade, factory' farming and entertainment industries, vivisection, destruction of habitat and inhumane captivity are just some examples of the ways in which animals suffer every day. Those of us who believe in an empathetic God, a God for whom 'not one... [sparrow] ... is forgotten' must acknowledge that it is a moral issue of the utmost importance.

Since it is undeniable that human activity has led to destruction of many species and the planet as a whole, the responsibility lies with human beings to reverse this trend. In 2005, the Church of England published a discussion paper. In it, the Most Rev Rowan Williams, suggests we should see 'ecology as a matter of justice for the human and the non-human world.' He seeks the rediscovery of humans' relationship with God, other people and also the world around us, commenting, that 'we are not consumers of what God has made, ... we are in communion with it.' In 1780, the philosopher, Immanuel Kant, considered the possibility that the way human beings treat animals could reflect their treatment of other human beings. The debate has resurfaced with a pioneering conference, organised by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, headed by the Anglican Theologian, Professor Andrew Linzey. The purpose is to investigate the link between human and animal abuse, the motivations behind abusive behaviour and the consequences of this for humans, animals, society and legislators.

Although few would say animal welfare is unimportant, those involved in the animal welfare network feel they are facing an uphill struggle. Some human beings often believe they can treat animals simply as a tool for human use. Sadly, the church has been complicit in this view, although this is now changing. Organisations such as the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) which operate globally are aimed to inject an attitude of care for our fellow creatures. Humans have to realise that it is not only human interests that should be taken into account whenever animals are involved. Clearly, if an individual is suffering pain, that pain and suffering matters to that individual, whether they are human or animal.

Kant, however, wrote that animals exist "only as means to human ends," meaning our duty to refrain from harming animals is an indirect duty towards fellow human beings. If we are being cruel to animals, we are more likely to be cruel to other human beings which means we ought not to be cruel to animals. Clearly, an attitude of indifference to the suffering of fellow creatures may, in turn, signify a lack of compassion when faced with the suffering of fellow human beings.

However, it might be worth raising the question about the inherent cruelty of actions. If cruelty is considered to be wrong against human beings, it seems that cruel actions against animals should be wrong simply because they are cruel. There is no need for the further step relating to the way such cruel individuals treat their fellow human beings. In other words, unless it is wrong in itself to harm the animal, it is hard to see why such an act would lead people to do other acts that are also wrong.

Nevertheless, the important truth contained within Kant's view is that evidence exists to suggest that violence against human beings has been preceded by violence against animals. Robert Ressler, an FBI Serial Killer Profiler, has claimed that "murderers very often start out by killing and torturing animals as kids." The Oxford Conference will allow academics to explore both the reality that there are human beings who deliberately cause suffering to animals and the implications of this. If abuse of animals, in turn, leads to further violence against human beings, this means it takes on another dimension in which animals become the method for safeguarding human life. If someone has behaved in a malicious way towards animals and the link between animal abuse and human violence suggests further malicious behaviour towards human beings, this will demand action from legislators, social workers and other such protectors of society. It may affect education since engen-

dering a consideration in children for other creatures could nurture care in later life and lower cases of deliberately inflicted cruelty to both humans and animals.

While the focus is on cultivating sympathy for animals, the essential by-product is that human beings will also benefit. It is hoped that the conference will highlight the importance of animal welfare and instil an attitude of compassion for animals within society. The implications of this could lead to more compassionate individuals and could, in turn, lead to a more compassionate society as a whole.

For more information about the Conference on the Relationship between Animal Abuse and Human Violence, please contact the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics on 020 7089 5216 or email oxfordconference@oxfordanimaeth.ics.com #

7th September 2007

How climate threatens us all

By Dr Charles Reed

No one now seriously disputes the overwhelming scientific evidence that suggests that climate change is a serious global threat, which demands an urgent global response. What is new is that governments are increasingly treating climate change as a security threat. As John Ashton, the UK's climate change envoy observed: "If the first priority of any government is to provide for the welfare of its citizens in return for the taxes that citizens pay, then climate change is potentially the most serious threat to this most fundamental of social contracts."

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina to the city of New Orleans in August 2005 underlines how even in a country as wealthy and resilient as the US, the social and economic dislocation caused by such a climatic catastrophe can place huge strains on a government's ability to provide for its citizens. The economic and security impacts of extreme climatic events in more vulnerable regions such as Africa and South Asia, or more strategically important regions, like the Middle East may be even more dramatic. Given the nature of our interdependent world, the impact of extreme climatic events will be felt not just in the immediate region affected, but also across the international community.

Seen from this perspective, climate change is not just a long-term threat to the environment it is an immediate threat to human security and prosperity with a fundamental impact across a range of national and international policy areas. The new language of climate security recognises that securing a stable climate is a global public good that is essential for all human security and development.

Climate change threatens to push many communities still further into poverty and in so doing, frustrate the efforts by the international community to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals. Goals that already looked distant now appear elusive. In addressing the painfully slow progress in realising these goals the British Prime Minister stated in his address to the United Nations, July 31, 2007: "There is no trade off between meeting our goals on economic development and meeting our goals on the environment and climate change - that tackling poverty is just not possible without also tackling climate change. Indeed economic progress, social justice and environmental care now go together. That is why Millennium Development Goal seven - that we ensure environmental sustainability - is central to what we do."

The relationship between food insecurity, malnutrition and health is well documented amongst development experts. Malnutrition is a health outcome in itself, but it also lowers natural resistance to infectious diseases by weakening the immune system. Climate change will potentially exacerbate this vulnerability since changes in temperature and precipitation are likely to increase the geographic range of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, cholera and diarrhoea. This is likely to generate higher morbidity and mortality rates among people, especially children, suffering from malnutrition than among food secure people.

The loss of low lying land-mass in coastal areas, which could be ravaged by storms and increases in sea levels, is likely to lead to displacements of populations, loss of life and damage to infrastructure. It is anticipated that rising sea levels could displace millions in Bangladesh alone and add a dangerous new dynamic to an already tense region. In some countries, like Tanzania and Ghana for example, the effect of even a small rise in sea level is already being felt, in the form of fresh water sources contaminated by salt water, or of increased coastal erosion.

Drought and other climate-related shocks risk sparking violence and conflict. Resource driven conflicts are not new, but in climate change there is a potentially new and deadly dynamic. A major contributing factor to the conflict in Darfur - a conflict in which 200,000 people have already died - has been a shift in rainfall patterns that has put nomadic herders and settled pastoralists into conflict with one another. The United Nations Development Programme reported, June 2007, that deserts had spread southwards by an average of 63 miles over the past four decades. During the UN Security Council debate on climate and security the representative from the Congo stated; "This will not be the first time people have fought over land and resources - but this time it will be on scale that dwarfs the conflicts of the past".

The risk of resource related conflicts will also affect regions strategically important to the UK national interest. The Middle East, for instance, contains 5% of the world's population, but only 1% of the world's water. This ratio will become more unfavourable with climate change. Disagreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours over water access to the Jordan basin have always been a source of tension. These tensions are likely to increase as climate change causes further depletion to the water basin. It is striking that even now, the question of what constitutes a viable two state solution is as much dependent on resolving disputes over access to natural resources as it is on resolving the status of Jerusalem.

The international community needs to assist developing countries to engage more, not only in global climate observations and modelling through the Global Climate Observation System (GCOS), but in smaller regional modelling that can provide location specific results. Based on such predictions, a better mapping of vulnerabilities can be undertaken - establishing which coastal areas are likely to suffer from a rise in sea level, which diseases are likely to be more prevalent and where they might be concentrated and, what crops are likely to face declining yields, for example.

How then should the Church respond to and contribute to the shaping of this the new agenda? The answer depends in part on the Church understanding that the connections between climate change and other issues are not only a driver for action, but also a necessary part of the response. If the Church wishes to drive this agenda forward then it needs to connect climate change with other issues and to then formulate its own response in a way, which can achieve multiple aims. This requires mainstreaming climate change into the wider mission of the Church, not least by recognising more clearly the inter-linkage between the Church's calling "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth" and its mission to "to seek to transform unjust structures of society".

The Church is in a unique position to make a powerful and timely contribution to this debate, but in a way that recognises the human security concerns of many of the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Dr Charles Reed

The briefing paper is available at:
[at: http://wwtv.cofe.anglicatt.org/info/socialpublic/international/climatechange/](http://wwtv.cofe.anglicatt.org/info/socialpublic/international/climatechange/)

Haslemere Herald

My local Newspaper

17th August 2007 *A change of diet could help save the planet*

Sir, - Having read with interest Chris Gardner's letter entitled "Time for Brown to go green" (The Herald, August 3), I am prompted to write and inform your readers of a very effective step that they can take in order to help reduce global warming. Certainly, we all have a duty to help in combating climate change.

We are urged to use low-energy light bulbs, recycle waste, insulate our homes, reduce car and air travel, etc, and, of course, all of these actions are very important, but the government, while advising us as consumers to make healthy food choices and eat more fruit and vegetables, does not go as far as actually daring to persuade us to eat less animal produce.

I will probably be very unpopular when I point out the now undisputed fact that animal farming is responsible for 18 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions, including 37 per cent of methane emissions and 65 per cent of emissions of nitrous oxide, another harmful greenhouse gas.

In its report entitled *Livestock's Long Shadow*, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) stresses the enormous impact of animal farming, which is greater than that of "the transportation sector worldwide", air, sea and land combined.

The FAO also points out that, in addition to contributing to global warming, livestock production is a significant factor in causing loss of biodiversity, water shortage, pollution and other environmental damage. The wholesale destruction of the Brazilian forests, cleared for cattle ranching, is an appalling environmental disaster, for example.

Furthermore, the livestock industry is very wasteful; an enormous quantity of grain, which could feed thousands of starving people, is fed to animals to produce meat.

So, if you want to reduce your "carbon footprint", eat less meat and dairy produce, aim for a vegetarian lifestyle, or, best of all, adopt a vegan diet, avoiding animal products altogether.

It has been shown by researchers at the University of ~ Chicago, that changing to a Vegan diet could make a bigger contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases than converting to an eco-friendly car.

S Burkitt, Marley Lane, Haslemere

Church Times

17th August 2007

Why can't Christians be greener?

Elaine Storkey is dismayed by the failure to act and lobby about the environment

NEARLY 30,000 people were at the Big Green Gathering in Somerset. Coming by car was discouraged, and the whole site was powered through sun and wind, apart from the odd campfire. But there was a quiet resolve about the five-day event. People were going to meet people, and have fun. A man in monk's habit wandered past the tent selling relics and indulgences: "Bits of the true cross, fingernail clippings from St Paul, earwax from St Etheldreda." He did not seem to be expecting sales. "Life — not available on television" stretched across another punter's chest.

More to the point were the gatherings in the campaigns field. Events from the previous week provided the urgency. Floods in India, Bangladesh, and England, heat waves, and crop failure in Southern Europe all demonstrated again the costs of global warming.

A document from the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) provided a focus for action. The study, Zero-carbon Britain (www.zerocarbonbritain.com), sets out an integrated Model for meeting global warming, and, like George Monbiot's *Heat* (Penguin, 2007), addresses the issues with thought, enthusiasm, and the substance of good answers. It is becoming clearer what should be done.

The study's suggested measures include: a move to greener eating patterns, with less focus on meat production; housing insulation on a large scale; energy efficiencies across industry; the use of coaches and electric vehicles; and drastic changes in fuel taxation. The details underline a resolve to care for the planet, and an awareness that we are all in this together.

We focused on transport, and met many groups involved in it. Together, we saw with some coherence the moves that must be made. Yet, even as little victories are won, there is confrontation. CAT thinks contraction, while Mr Brown thinks growth. Coalitions oppose road building, but motorways expand. Government will not do anything decisive about air travel. Car use continues largely untouched and subsidised, while coach systems remain under-investigated.

Global-warming issues seem to stay at a low level of practical priority. One of the groups, Plane Stupid, offered cogent arguments against air-travel expansion. But opponents are already demonising them, treating them like terrorists because of their coalition's demonstration at Heathrow. When commercial interests are threatened, proper debate goes out of the window.

In this developing scene of climate-change activity, Christian resolve seems patchy. The scientist, Sir John Houghton, is solidly behind the CAT document, setting out the principles of action. His work has been prophetic. Organisations such as Arocha work at sustainable and meek living, and initiatives such as Operation Noah and Shrinking the Footprint highlight the urgency of cutting our carbon emissions.

Even with these strong promptings, however, we seem slow to act together effectively, given the size of our numerical presence. We might love our neighbour and care for God's planet, but too many of our churches and organisations have not begun to translate this into action. We could reduce energy consumption ourselves by sharing and paring; operate communal targets for eliminating waste or cutting flying distances; and promote schemes for radical home-refurbishment programmes.

We could even press politically for higher fuel-tax in order to cut vehicle use, and greener transport through cleaner coaches. But we don't. Until we resolve, with policies and conviction, to live out this Christian calling at least as urgently as these secular stewards, we will be remain part of the problem, instead of its solution.

Dr Elaine Storkey is President of Tearfund.



The Sun

Jamie in war over hens' hell

CRUSADING chef Jamie Oliver wants to build a giant CHICKEN COOP in Trafalgar Square. The TV cook is seeking planning permission to put up a vast glass poultry shed to let people see conditions suffered by intensively farmed hens, Westminster City Council has refused to allow real chickens in the temporary structure in Central London next month - so hi-tech gadgets will be used instead. A source said: "He thinks by bringing this issue into the open in a space people can't ignore, they'll think twice."