

green christian

the magazine

O Taste and See!

Food, farming and faith
Exploring Christian Animism
Heathrow 13: protesting against expansion

O Taste and See!

Clare Redfern, commissioning editor, writes on behalf of the team



From the moment of birth, we have a complicated, intimate and emotional relationship with food: it nourishes us, comforts us, can give us health or make us sick. We can share it, hoard it, binge on it and waste it. It's a part of our cultural inheritance and our identity.

Though as individuals our contribution might seem slight, collectively, through the food we eat and drink, and the effects of its production, our impacts on soil, oceans, forests, animals and people, are immense. This could also be an area of our lives in which we have most room to manoeuvre to bring about change, either directly through what we consume or through political lobbying.

Green Christian pioneered the LOAF principles: advocating Local, Organic, Animal friendly and Fairtrade food, and the "agroecological" concepts described in this issue have much in common. It's about farming with respect for the long-term sustainability of the whole community – the whole of Creation! My eating habits have certainly changed in

the course of preparing this issue of *Green Christian* and I now make a mean vegan burger.

But change is never easy; our choices are often limited, not least by our purse. Developing new habits, and resisting the most convenient option, requires much encouragement and a deep-rooted commitment to embodying a different way of life.

Surely it is within hopeful and encouraging communities we are best able to bring about positive change. As recounted in these pages, farmers in a drought-stricken part of Cuba learnt together how to enrich the land, develop healthier soil, more biodiversity and stronger communities. And closer to home, a Suffolk smallholder writes of how with local support, he is enabled to continue farming with integrity and passion for the land. There are increasingly opportunities, through crop-

share schemes and urban allotments, for us all to enjoy locally grown food, whilst getting soil under our fingernails.

This is also a spiritual task. Going against the flow, whether changing your diet, protesting against food regulations, or airport expansion, demands a spirituality and a community that will both challenge and nurture us. So read on, and learn of how we can together make tentative hopeful steps towards that Shalom, where our relationships with all people, all animals and the whole planet embody justice, wholeness and peace.

Magazine survey

We are extremely grateful to everyone who took the trouble to answer our reader feedback survey. We've been given lots of ideas and suggestions for content and design, that we plan to follow up. The respondent who optimistically asked for an article by Tolstoy may be disappointed, but we have included a quote.

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Leo Tolstoy

With this edition of *Green Christian* we say a big thank you to Miriam Pepper. Miriam became Reviews Editor in 2007 after joining our steering committee. She continued to edit reviews for us after returning to Australia to work for the Uniting Church's Earth Ministry. Thank you, Miriam, and stay in touch!"

Paul Bodenham,
Chair of Green Christian.



Green Christian

Published by Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link)

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Editorial Policy

Green Christian is intended as a forum for Christians of all traditions to reflect on, and contribute to, current thinking and action in the Green Movement. The opinions expressed by guest authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors but are welcome for their sincerity and insight. Items mailed with *Green Christian* reflect the views of their authors or publishers and not necessarily those of Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link).

Paper Stock

This issue of *Green Christian* is printed on Revive 100 Silk, paper made from 100% recycled de-inked post consumer waste silk paper. It is fully biodegradable. Further details from the editors.

Magazine Distribution

Geoff Perrett, 3 Charis Avenue
Bristol BS10 5JD
0117 962 9345

Design by

dbagraphics@gmail.com

Print production and mailing

Index Print, 7 St David's Close, Colchester,
Essex CO4 3BD

ISSN 1364-3169

Green Christian is a registered charity No.
328744

Company Registration No. 2445198

Next Issue

Copy Deadline: August 2016
Publication Date: November 2016

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GreenChristian

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We affirm our belief in God as Creator of all things and in Jesus Christ as Lord, looking to the Holy Spirit for guidance through the Scriptures, and seeking to hear Him in the challenges of the present time.

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Real farming, real food

What does ethical, sustainable farming look like in the UK? **Andy Mellen** offers a personal perspective on some large trends and even larger challenges



I was born and raised on a small farm in Suffolk, in the “far east” of the UK. My parents kept cattle, a few sheep, pigs, chickens and (for some reason I’ve never fully understood), two grumpy donkeys. Exposure to this menagerie of farm animals and involvement in the daily tasks of looking after them developed a deep love of farming in me, and I was in no doubt that I wanted to pursue a career in agriculture. These animals were part of our lives – they could range freely over large areas of pasture and we did our best to provide for their needs: food, clean water, veterinary attention should the need arise, and shelter from the worst of the weather. However, these were not pets. We were in no doubt that the purpose of raising these animals was to provide us with food: rich creamy milk from our Jersey cow, eggs from the chickens, and meat. But we could sit down to our Sunday roast knowing that the animal that had provided the joint had lived well and healthily.

It wasn’t until I left home for agricultural college and experience in the wider farming “industry” that I began to

understand that not everyone farmed in this way. Over the years I have worked on several farms, and visited many more. Though farmers would shy away from using the term “factory-farming” of their businesses, as a rough description of some parts of the livestock industry, it fits. But let me backtrack and try to explain how this has come about.

The most significant event for farmers in the 20th century was the Second World War, when imports of food were sharply reduced due to the Nazi occupation of Europe and U-Boats sinking merchant ships bringing food to Britain. Rationing was introduced and lasted well after the war had finished and a huge effort was made to increase food production; both domestically with the “dig for victory” campaign, and on farms with the “war ag.” committees in each County. Their task was to increase the area of land under cultivation and the productivity of farms and this drive for increased yield continued long after the war had finished, and has essentially given us the industry we have today.

However it has come at a cost to our environment. Over a 100,000 miles of hedgehog have disappeared, vast areas of wetland have been drained, and high levels of productivity can only be maintained by the use of massive energy inputs – primarily fertilizer which is produced from natural gas. Along the way there have been many other changes: smaller farms have mostly disappeared as farms have consolidated, and the workforce has drastically reduced as bigger and more efficient machines have taken over much of the hard manual labour. The 1970s and 80s saw good profits being made, but also production surpluses and the beginning of the common market in Europe. Farmers who own their land are now very rich (on paper) as land prices have risen substantially. Another significant development has been the rise of the supermarkets, whose convenience we all appreciate, but who, with their dominant position in the market, wield enormous power over their suppliers.

Today, many sectors of farming are struggling to make a profit. In most cases, farmers are not producing “food”, they are producing commodities for a global marketplace, and are therefore subject to the vagaries of the market whilst the costs of inputs continue to rise. Or if supplying direct to one of the large supermarkets they are often in an unequal trading relationship where they are price-takers rather than price-makers. There are exceptions – farmers who are making a go of selling direct to their customers through farmers’ markets, box schemes and other innovative delivery systems, are farmers who value sustainability alongside productivity. But in general, the drive for food produced at the lowest possible cost has given us the industry we have today: efficient, large scale, productive, yet also mechanized and industrial, and highly dependent on inputs derived from fossil-fuels.

In this landscape animals are not individuals but simply units of production. The dairy cow, which might naturally live for twenty years or more, is usually worn out and discarded after six or seven years – and in some large units the cows will never set foot in a field but instead have all their food brought to them. The chicken reared for meat is now bred to grow so quickly that its legs don’t develop fast enough for its bodyweight, and it spends much of the time sitting rather than expressing natural behaviours. Even in egg production, where recent legislation has done away with the worst types of battery cages, so-called “free-range” chickens can be



housed in tiered units so large that they spend the greater part of their lives indoors. And yet the marketing of these products shows nothing of the grim realities of production – instead the packaging shows happy animals frolicking in daisy-strewn fields, with product names which point to an idyllic rural life.

Given this picture, should we be eating meat at all? Or milk? Or eggs? And as we are starting to see the impacts of climate change in a world where millions still go hungry, can we justify the environmental impact that farm animals make, particularly ruminants whose stomachs belch out methane, a potent greenhouse gas?

These are questions I genuinely struggle with, yet here I am, a farmer who continues to produce meat. For the last few years my wife and I have been developing a smallholding in another part of Suffolk. Starting with three acres, we planted apple trees, put up a polytunnel and a fruit cage, built some hen houses and grew vegetables. As opportunities have come along we have been able to rent more land, so that we now farm almost thirty acres, having added a small flock of sheep and the beginnings of a suckler beef herd in the last year. We started off as organic smallholders – following the very exacting Soil Association standards, against which our holding was inspected and certified each year. More recently we decided that, since we know most of our customers directly, we could do without the official “organic” designation and expensive certification fees, though we haven’t substantially changed how we farm.

The food writer Michael Pollan has summarised his advice on healthy, sustainable eating into eight pithy words: “Eat real food, not too much, mostly plants.” I find this a very useful place to start. Whilst I totally understand and respect those who choose to have nothing to do with the mess of animal production by being vegan, or those who





choose the halfway-house of vegetarianism, I do continue to eat meat, mostly that produced on our farm, or meat whose provenance and production is known (I go along with the writer Wendell Berry, who writes that “I dislike the thought that some animal has been made miserable in order to feed me. If I am going to eat meat, I want it to be from an animal that has lived a pleasant, uncrowded life outdoors, on bountiful pasture, with good water nearby and trees for shade. And I am getting almost as fussy about food plants”).

We should remember that all human activity results in the taking of life, whether we intend to or not. The blunt

biological truth is that we animals can only remain alive by eating other life, be it plant or animal. Even the production of a bag of flour or a block of tofu can only come about through ploughing, cultivating and harvesting a field to grow a crop – and in the process ending the lives of thousands of insects and small mammals. We can only choose non-violence in our diet by degrees. Harvesting animals for meat, on our farm, involves planning, effort, purpose and respect. It is not killing in the sense of a wasteful, thoughtless process, but the natural end for which these animals were domesticated, bred and reared. So here are some of the rough and ready rules that govern our eating habits:

- We eat meat less often and in smaller quantity, but ensure that we get meat which has been properly raised, which tends to be more expensive.
- We try to buy direct from the producer rather than through a supermarket.
- We are moving towards eating more grass-fed beef and lamb rather than farmed poultry or pork, as these can be raised on areas unsuitable for crops and so are not in competition with food with humans.
- We give thanks at the beginning of every meal that God has provided for our needs when so many in the world go hungry. ■



Andy Mellen is a farmer and writer who has worked in the agricultural industry in this country, and in development and humanitarian relief in Nigeria and Malawi. He has co-authored a book *No Oil in the Lamp* which examines energy issues from a Christian perspective.

Photos by Andy Mellen

Who owns the field?

Is it the one who is named in the deeds
whose hands never touched the clay
or is it the one who gathers the sheaves

takes a scythe to the thistles, plants the beech,
digs out the dockweed, lays the live hazel?
Is it the one who is named in the deeds

or the one who pulls ragwort on his knees,
lifts rocks into a cart, splits larch for stakes,
the one who gathers the sheaves,

slashhooks the briars, scatters the seed,
cuts his hand on barbed wire, hangs the gate?
Is it the one who is named in the deeds

or the one who could surely lead
to where children made a hiding place
in an old lime tree. He gathers the sheaves.

Is it the one who tends cattle and sheep,
and can tell you how the field got its name?
Is it the one who is named in the deeds
or the one who gathers the sheaves?

Jane Clarke, *The River* (Bloodaxe Books, 2015)

Press Release

Oh what a mess May's fallen into –
winter's back, gnashing at petals,
urging the North Sea through defences,
battering timbers into splinters,

twisting girders like rubber bands.
For some, *We've Done the Gulf Stream In*,
for others, *Nature Wins in the End* –
Canuteish scenarios, peppering the *Mail*.

But if the Earth's dying
to rid herself of us, as a buffalo longing
to rid herself of flies, endures, endures,
until the evening comes

and it's down to the river to submerge
everything except nostrils, crown and horns,
she's not at odds
with anyone, just being as-it-is.

Having progressed with less concern
than a fly has for a buffalo's eye,
we've pushed all her buttons, and it's no
surprise, the *Backlash of The Seas*.

Which brings me to this moment, on my knees
imploping a reprieve.

Julia Dale (c. 1998)

Why we should not eat meat

Coral Raven argues that there can be no compromise: Christians must not be carnivores

Mahatma Gandhi was right when he said, "There is sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed". Has the West become gluttonous in its appetite for meat, factory farming being a consequence of this greed? Is it not unnatural and inhumane to cram livestock together to feed a population who eat far too much meat anyway? What about the effects of factory farming on global warming and environmental chaos?

Most of us abhor cruelty to animals, so why do we tend to be ostrich-like when it comes to farming practices where animals are denied their natural habitat. For example 95% of chickens reared for meat, live a short life intensively farmed in windowless sheds under bright light to encourage maximum activity, feeding and drinking for nearly 24 hours, not allowing rest. Sick birds can be trampled to death in the crowded squalor, and infections spread like wildfire. Ducks are frequently farmed in similar ways, never seeing the light of day; current UK law does not require water to be provided to ducks other than for drinking.¹ Pig farming is also often highly intensive. Around 58 per cent of female pigs are kept for up to five weeks in farrowing crates in the UK around the time of giving birth.

It might be argued that these abuses are overcome by buying non-intensive, free-range and organically-reared animals. However, I am of the firm belief that animals are conscious, sentient beings, and it is immoral to kill them for food. We know that animals have a similar nervous system to us; it's hard to deny a dog's delight in play, or yelp of pain when hurt. Slaughterhouse CCTV, which agribusinesses oppose, has made evident the brutality that occurs even in the slaughter of organically reared or "freedom food".

Christians have often been at the forefront in calling for an end to animal cruelty. William Wilberforce, famous for his role in abolishing slavery, was also a co-founder of the RSPCA. Charles Spurgeon said with regard to animals, "cruelty hardens the heart, deadens the conscience, and destroys the finer sensibilities of the soul ... for the man who truly loves his Maker becomes tender towards all the creatures his Lord has made".

Besides, intensive animal farming, dairy and beef in particular, carries a huge ecological burden. Cows emit large quantities of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and liquid manure from cattle contributes to this too, as well as causing pollution of water courses. Each year, 32 million acres of rainforest are cut down for animal grazing and soya feed production.² According to an International Food Policy Research Institute report, if we in the industrial world reduced our meat consumption by half, 33 million people could be saved from starvation. This is because intensive meat production relies on the importing of grain, soya and other foodstuffs from the

developing world as animal feed, reducing available land and resources for local food production. And that is if we only reduce our consumption by half!

Another report from the think tank Chatham House, argues that without concerted action to address over-consumption of meat, it will be near impossible to prevent global warming from passing the danger level of 2°C.³ And organisations ranging from the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, to Friends of the Earth, and Tearfund also promote this view.

How healthy is meat eating anyway? Winston Craig, a Professor of Nutrition states: "The consumption of a diet of whole grains, legumes, vegetables, nuts and fruits, with the avoidance of meat and high-fat animal products, along with a regular exercise programme is consistently associated with lower blood cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, less obesity and consequently less heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, and mortality."

Unfortunately some Christians respond to vegetarians by quoting isolated passages from the Bible, perhaps by stating that God allows us to eat meat. In the Genesis narrative, after the Fall, God's relationship with mankind changes; violence and corruption had entered the Earth as a result of man's sin. It is in this context, subsequent to the Fall, that the permission to kill for food in Genesis 9 should be understood. Furthermore, this permission to, "eat all flesh for food" is far from unconditional or absolute. See Gen 9:4,5.

"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting, I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man."

Animal ethicist and theologian, Rev. Professor Andrew Linzey, interprets this as meaning that killing animals is allowed as a concession, requiring an account given, and not it seems according to God's original will and intention.⁴ God's command in Genesis 1 to "rule over the fish of the



Images: La puma/ Shutterstock

sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle” is certainly no licence to abuse creatures or to use them as mere commodities. This rule should be understood as unselfish guardianship with love and compassion.

Was eating meat God’s original intention, or has it just become the norm in a corrupt world, as was slavery at one time, and just as poverty exists and yet is tolerated? I look forward to the day when we live together in harmony, as envisioned by Isaiah:

“The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11: 6-9) ■

References:

1. <http://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/farmanimals/reportsandresources>
2. Environmental Defence Fund, www.edf.org
3. Laura Wellesley 2015 *Changing Climate, Changing Diets: Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption*. Chatham House.
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Coral Raven is a writer and animal welfare campaigner who lives in Wales.

Animals and the Environment

Our concern for animal welfare should not be inspired by human-centred environmentalism, argues **Rev Dr Paul Overend**, but by a theocentric view of Creation

There are many environmental arguments that recognise the damage that the meat, dairy and fish industries have on our environment and on human health. My concern with such approaches is that they are founded on a human-centred approach to environmentalism – having a primary concern for human welfare, environmental considerations coming next, and concern for animals of least importance.

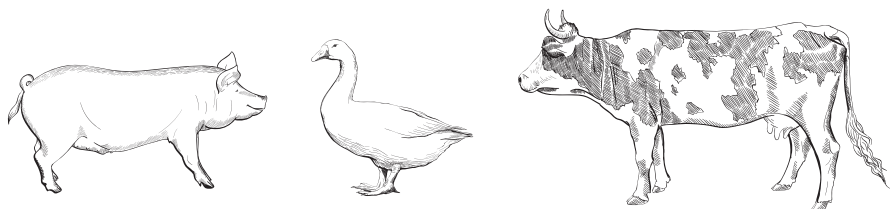
Theologically, this is to place humanity at the centre as our ultimate concern, making humanity our god. While the Kingdom of God concerns human justice and human flourishing, it is not limited to human concerns. Surely for Christians, environmental awareness grows from God’s loving concern and compassion for all of Creation. An alternative theocentric way of thinking

of the relationship between animals and the environment is not grounded in the technical effects of animal rearing on the environment, but is theologically grounded in God’s creating and life-giving love.

The Christian narrative, which we celebrate in the reading of scripture, in worship and in sharing in God’s purpose and mission, is one in which God creates and loves, attends to the cry of the needy and liberates the oppressed, and brings the light of hope into the dark places of despair. Knowing our need, God the Son identifies and suffers with us and calls us to follow him; God the Spirit transforms our hearts and kindles our love, that we may be transformed and become more Christ-like in giving of ourselves to bear on our neighbour’s pain.

This narrative portrays God’s intention not only for human welfare but for the flourishing of the whole of Creation: plants and trees, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea and all living creatures. Indeed, they are related, and should be understood holistically. But humans are unique in so far as human flourishing involves sharing in the divine purpose. God intends that we grow in love, becoming partakers of the divine nature.

Growing in compassion for our neighbour, which includes other species, is a way we grow. Learning to love Creation involves empathy and compassion – to recognise the feelings of other sentient creatures, and be moved by their suffering, leading to acts of loving mercy to ease their burdens. Making animal welfare a primary concern is part of fulfilling our calling to be human, flourishing in self-giving love. ■



Images: Nikiparonak/Shutterstock



Paul Overend is the Lay Development Officer in the Diocese of Norwich. He and his wife Sue are vegans and members of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals.

Making babies green at both ends

Alison Blenkinsop offers her thoughts on the environmental benefits of breastfeeding



Polly Strong, with Barnaby (feeding), Tom, Sam and William.

Photo by: Paula Restrick

Two items in the last issue of GC caught my attention: washable nappies and population growth. It seems the public are increasingly aware of the ecological impact of single-use nappies. But there doesn't seem to be a corresponding awareness of how infant feeding methods affect the global environment and human fertility.

In my experience, many private and public discussions on baby feeding begin with agreement that breastmilk is the ideal first food. The effect of bottle-feeding on planet Earth is never mentioned, yet formula milk's carbon footprint and food miles are far greater than those of human milk. Among the many environmental costs of breastmilk substitutes, some are obvious: grazing land and animal feed for dairy herds, manufacture and transport of the finished products, disposal of packaging and containers. Others are less well recognised, but no less damaging: sub-optimal health for both mothers and babies, and the greater costs both of infant food and medical care which can bankrupt poor families. The increased fertility of non-breastfeeding mothers with little access to contraceptives is also of concern. This is where population growth fits in. However, space doesn't permit a more detailed discussion of this issue, nor of the popular view that breastfeeding is inherently difficult.

Some people consider that the way mothers feed their babies is entirely a matter of choice. But these choices have been affected by decades of growth in babyfood and associated industries. Although UK legislation restricts advertising of first stage infant milks to the public, companies give financial

inducements to medical institutions and individual practitioners to do this for them. They have also encouraged brand visibility by developing a range of unnecessary products for older babies. Poor media coverage of research comparing health outcomes of different feeding methods exacerbates the problem. Information based on well-tested evidence is drowned out by "celebrity guru" opinions, founded on extremely limited experience, and the advice of health professionals with no training in the art and science of breastfeeding. There is little or no NHS funding for such training, nor payment for qualified supporters. Inevitably, families with the most need get the least help.

Moreover, the government no longer collects infant feeding data to identify gaps in support provision. Such help is needed to raise the UK's rock-bottom breastfeeding rate to standards set by the World Health Organisation. Birth practices such as opiates in labour, overuse of operative delivery, and early separation of the mother-baby pair greatly increase the likelihood that breastfeeding will end after a few weeks, rather than several years. For these and many other reasons, formula feeding has become so normal in western culture that the bottle has become the symbol of babyhood, displayed even on public rooms where nappies may be changed!

We may wonder what can be done to increase awareness of the environmental impact of baby care. The following actions need no particular effort:

- positive support for breastfeeding mothers, especially in public areas such as churches, and offers to meet the costs of trained specialists for problem-solving
- encouragement for new parents to investigate and use washable nappies
- choosing birth congratulation cards and children's toys without bottles, dummies or other separators such as cribs and pushchairs, replacing with images of close holding and carrying
- monitoring children's books to check for images of natural baby feeding by human and animal mothers.

In this way, we can all join in the quest to make babies green from top to bottom! ■

Alison Blenkinsop is a retired midwife and former International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Her book *Fit to Bust – a Comic Treasure Chest* is a light-hearted celebration of breastfeeding in songs and stories. Sales support the work of Baby Milk Action, which campaigns to protect breastfeeding and both breastfed and formula fed babies. Contact Alison for more information on aliblenk@hotmail.com



Jesus and the sacred wild

Noel Moules explores the biblical foundations for Christian Animism

Jesus emerges from his baptism in the wild waters of the Jordan River, “full of the Spirit ... and immediately” (we are told), “the Spirit drove him *into* the wilderness... and he was *with* the wild animals” (Lk 4:1; Mk 1:12-13). This powerful statement expresses much more than Jesus having a love for the solitude of wild spaces. It opens a story that reveals His true relationship with the world, and wild nature in particular, which can only be described as *animist*. It also implies that following Him has at its heart a call to Christian Animism: alive with God’s life-giving, Creation-sustaining Spirit, and offering an Earth-focused spirituality of harmony and hope.

The word “animism” is shaped from the Latin *anima* meaning “breath”. It is widely used to describe the way tribal and Indigenous peoples view the world and choose to live within it. A widely quoted definition is: “Animists are people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others.”¹ An exciting observation, emphasizing “living in relationship” with everything; this connects exactly with Jesus’ message of *shalom* where all things live and move in dynamic harmony with one another.

My personal definition would be: animism believes that everything that exists is both alive and sacred, with all things being interconnected and related: that the Earth, along with each animal, plant, seemingly inert object and natural phenomena are persons (or potentially so); a community of Creation requiring harmonious relationships between humans, their ancestors and wild nature, nurtured by respectful and sustainable lifeways. I believe every global Indigenous community would broadly accept this; it is also fundamentally biblical, at the heart of Jesus’ worldview, and should be ours as well. Jesus examples this Animist way, building on early biblical insights:

- *Everything is alive ... everything is person ...* Jesus says, “Rocks may cry out”, “Mountains may move”, “Consider flowers and birds and learn from them”. Winds and waves are obedient, “yet the wind blows where it wills”. Here living consciousness, volition and personhood are each understood to be present. (Lk 19:40; Mk 11:23; Lk 12:27; Mk 4:41; Jn 3:8).
- *Everything is sacred ...* Jesus’ incarnation doesn’t make everything sacred, rather declares it already is! His words about bread and wine emphasise this. “This is my body-blood”, is neither magical nor symbolic, but a statement of fact about reality (Mk 14:22-25).
- *Everything is connected ...* Jesus’ message was *shalom*, which means the harmonious interconnectedness of absolutely everything; God’s kingdom fully expressed (Lk 10:5,90).
- *Everything is nurtured ...* God sends the rain and the sun for growth. Clothes the grass, feeds the birds, with none of them dying without divine concern.
- *Everything is respected ...* Jesus said, “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Respect begins with love, and Jesus makes it clear every “person” we encounter – human or other-than-human – is in fact our neighbour.

This is a call to think differently about the world, how we understand it, and choose to live within it.

Today’s global ecological crisis is first and foremost a spiritual crisis. Yes, personal, social and political strategies are urgent; however, we simply will not see the deep long-term sustained and necessary transformations, without making spirituality foundational. Spirituality is at the heart of Christian Animism, with ecology central to our mission. Jesus says, “Proclaim the good news to the whole Creation” (Mk 16:15). Ours must be a distinctive voice at the centre of global eco-spiritual conversation and action. While Christian Animism touches everything, I will end with just three thoughts:

It challenges dualism, calling us to live by *shalom*. Dualism divides understanding into two opposed or contrasting aspects. It has no biblical basis, yet has plagued Christian thinking for more than 1500 years. Crudely, Christian dualism argues heaven is the dwelling place of God, and that is our ultimate destiny; this Earth and cosmos will be destroyed by fire, replaced by another new Heaven and Earth, and so care for this environment is meaningless, it is here to be exploited.² The central biblical concept of reality, *shalom*, challenges this. Usually translated “peace”, more accurately it denotes wholeness, integratedness, and completeness: everything — physical-spiritual — moving together in dynamic harmony. *Shalom* is the message of



Photo: kavram/ Shutterstock

Jesus, identical to the “kingdom of God”; it is our message too. (See Isa 9:7; Lk 10:5, 11; Acts 10:36; Eph 2:17 et al) *Shalom* is about all relationships, and proclaims Creation’s destiny. No one is going to heaven! We will all be part of a *renewed* (not new) Creation, not somewhere else but *here*.³ *Shalom* works for the physical wellbeing of all things without exception, challenging injustice in all its forms.

It challenges dominion, calling us to live by meekness. The single most ecologically destructive biblical idea believes God gave humans “*dominion* over the Earth”. (Gen 1:26,28) This traditional translation and interpretation is simply wrong. The Hebrew phrase *v’yirdu* can mean “*dominion with*”, but never “*over*”.⁴ Living in God’s image, we are called to companionship *with* Creation, living *with* Creation in *shalom*. This word “*with*” is the most ecologically-significant word in scripture! Jesus interprets *dominion* using “*meekness*” saying, “The meek shall inherit the earth”. A true biblical understanding of meekness suggests three seemingly incompatible ideas, in a single concept:⁵

- Selfless anger against injustice
- Serene poise and self-control
- Simple gentleness and compassion

Jesus embodies these, for example in stilling the storm and riding an ungentled donkey-foal, and teaching of flowers and birds as examples of God’s character and love.

It calls us to nurture our connection with nature. We begin by opening our senses to the natural world. Then we begin to observe and learn from nature: “Ask the animals and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you” (Job 12:7-8). Finally, we build life-giving relationships with Creation: “you shall not fear the wild animals of the Earth; for you shall be in covenant *with* the stones of the wilderness, and the wild animals shall be in *shalom with you*” (Job 5:22-23). ■

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- 2 A misinterpretation of passages like Jn14:2; Lk 23:43; 2Pt 3:7,12-13 and many more
- 3 Peace / *shalom* on Earth (Isa 11:6-9; Lk 2:14), New Jerusalem comes down to Earth (Rev 21:2)
- 4 See Douglas-Klotz N. 2003, *The Genesis Meditations: a shared practice of peace for Christians, Jews and Muslims*, Quest Books
- 5 See F Hauck and S Schulz, 1968, ‘Prau’ in Kittel G and Friedrich G (eds), ‘*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*’, Eerdmans; and Barclay W. 1956, ‘*Gospel of Matthew (Vol 1) The Daily Study Bible*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh; 91-93



Noel Moules is a founder member of the Anabaptist Network UK and the Anvil Trust, and is a frequent speaker at events as diverse as Spring Harvest, Greenbelt and Pagan Pride. His first book was *Fingerprints of Fire, Footprints of Peace: a spiritual manifesto from a Jesus perspective*
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Agroecology: the sustainable alternative to industrial farming

Clare Redfern quizzes Dr Julia Wright, a senior researcher at the recently-formed Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) at Coventry University.

What is Agroecology and how is it influencing world farming?

Agroecology denotes a system of farming underpinned by ecological science. It considers the whole system of food growing: what brings long term health to the land, helps the local people and farmers, and gives high yields of nutritious food. So agroecology is not only a science, but also a set of practices and a social movement.

The agroecological movement is growing rapidly, based on an increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of all life forms. It is being promoted by the Via Campesina (a network of millions of smallholder farmers worldwide), by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's "Right to Food" Project, and by NGOs such as Oxfam and Action Aid. Here in the UK, we now have an All Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology.

Many argue that intensive farming, using the benefits of GM crops, is necessary to feed the world's growing population.

GM crops do not have a role to play from an agroecological perspective, as they emerge from a mindset that focuses on high yields of crops grown as monocultures, with an intensive use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. These toxins will only damage ecosystem health, and besides, the problems high-input agriculture tries to solve can be addressed more sustainably, including those many problems that it creates itself. The very argument about "feeding the population" could arguably be identified as patronising and even arrogant. It would be more empowering for the peoples of the world to be able, and enabled, to feed themselves.



Cuban farmers examine the maize crop

Photo: J. Wright

Evidence suggests that yields could be doubled or tripled through agroecological production¹ though this would require changes in land use and in diet. However, these changes would themselves bring ecosystem and human health benefits, which actually gives us a win-win situation².

Can you give us an example of these principles in practice?

Yes, in the 2000s, Cuba experienced a severe drought over several years. In just one province, over 3,000 wells dried up, over 2,000 head of cattle were lost, and many farmers were unable to sow their staple maize crop. The easy culprit to blame was "climate change", since temperatures have risen by half a degree in recent years. But another crucial factor was the poor condition of soils in the region, which had high levels of erosion, low water retention, and low fertility, largely as a result of long-term industrial practices. Soils were already bare, exposed and vulnerable when a drought set in.

The conventional solution was to import more irrigation equipment and to construct a large water pipeline from the wetter west of the country to the drier east. However, a lack of financial resources ruled this option out. Another solution offered by this industrialised mindset was the use of genetically modified maize, but a drought-tolerant variety was not yet available.

So in our research project, we supported two communities in the participatory development of water and soil conservation strategies. The key aims were to build the capacity of local farmer leaders and groups (both male and female) firstly to understand the water cycle and manage water sustainably. Secondly, to experiment on-farm with simple, low-cost soil fertility improvement techniques. These included cover cropping, applying biological fertilisers such as manure, rainwater harvesting, and testing a broad range of crop varieties, including traditional varieties from other regions



Intercropping between maize retains water and increases crop diversity

Photo: J. Wright

of the country. Farmers and households were encouraged to share their own local knowledge and experiences.

And did these measures help?

At the end of the year we encountered both intended and unintended results³. There were widespread increases in crop diversity, yields and production. Manure became a valuable resource, with livestock corralled for manure collection. Biological fertilisers were widely used, and soil water retention capacity improved. This meant that water also became more available for livestock needs. Also, the farmers' capacity to work together increased and this continued beyond the life of the project. Most significantly, the first vegetable market opened in the community, where previously there had never been any surplus to sell; also an informal seed market established itself.

The changes led to improvements in family income and nutrition – all for a very small amount of investment. Most telling were the responses by community members when asked whether they had seen any changes brought about by the project: “A year ago drought was a worry to us, but now we don't rate this as important as other concerns”, and “The main change? Now all the children in our village wear shoes”.

These successes came about because of the different way of thinking leading to different techniques and technologies. If a genetically-engineered, drought-tolerant maize had been available in Cuba, patented seed would have had to be purchased each year from outside the community; no other crops could have been grown as the soil would have remained degraded,

and some irrigation would still have been required. Our alternative approach was more effective and efficient, with a far more diverse range of beneficial outcomes.

But can these methods alone feed a growing world population?

These methods “alone” are complex and fun, and yes, they can feed a growing world population to the extent that agriculture plays a role in enabling food security. We know that some of the main causes of food insecurity are not directly agricultural, but political and logistical. But looking at agriculture, we need a shift in focus from research into quantity (yield and productivity increases) to quality. There has been success in terms of producing a sufficient quantity of food. However the world isn't “being fed”. In fact there are more over-nourished people than under-nourished. As Hans Herren of the Millennium Institute says, we are producing the wrong type of food at the wrong time in the wrong place.

The industrial agrifood sector tends to avoid addressing the issue of food quality, largely because it makes its money from transforming a small range of cheap staple foods to a wide range of highly processed, denatured “food-like substances”.

Much dietary-related disease is caused by the overconsumption of processed foods, particularly processed carbohydrates in the form of sugars and modern grain varieties. We need to develop techniques that maintain or enhance the nutritional quality of the raw material. The few studies that have attempted to analyse fluctuations in levels of vitamin and mineral content in foods (specifically fruit and vegetables) all point to a decline in vitamin and mineral content since the 1950s. The main reasons suggested for this decline are poor soil and crop management combined with plant breeding programmes that aim for high yield traits but may have selected-out nutritional characteristics.

How much difference do organic farming methods make to nutritional content?

The most recent and comprehensive scientific review of organic versus non-organic production methods concludes



Before agroecological measures: Cuban maize plants in drought-affected soil

Photo: J. Wright

that organic crops and food products have improved quality characteristics with more desirable antioxidants and less potentially harmful cadmium, nitrogen and pesticide residues⁵. One of the neatest examples of the relationship between soil, plant and human health is the antioxidant content of vegetables. If pesticides are applied to the crop, they inhibit the release of the plant's own self defense mechanism against pests and diseases, known as "secondary metabolites" or "antioxidants", and these substances help build our own defense against cancer and other illnesses. In fact, organic foods contain 10-50 per cent higher concentrations of these metabolites⁶. So by applying pesticides to a crop, we not only ingest these toxins, but we also reduce the antioxidant levels of our plant foods.

We still have a lot to learn about soil-plant-human relationships. For example, we know that mycorrhizal fungi take up minerals from the soil and transfer them to plant roots. We also know that roots colonised by mycorrhizae in organic farming systems are 40 percent longer than in industrial farming systems. This suggests that organic systems provide more opportunity for soil mineral uptake.

Will Agroecology eventually become a mainstream practice?

Will shareholders in the agrifood industry be happy with a move away from where the greatest profits can currently be made? Clearly agroecological farming and food systems, if mainstreamed, would create an abundance of jobs and wealth, but

not in the same hands as the present. We definitely need a deeper ecological awareness taught in our agricultural colleges and universities, and practiced in our research centres and farming sector.

There is a lot at stake, not least economically, if we take a more joined-up approach. Dietary-related disease is estimated to cost the NHS around £6bn a year, so the business case for improving crop and livestock nutritional quality, whilst building environmental resilience is clear. But a real change of direction is needed to achieve a diverse, fair and sustainable food system.

Can ordinary people help bring about this change?

However insurmountable the challenge appears, whatever we can each do at an individual level is worth doing. That means making informed choices when it comes to buying food, whether in a market or a restaurant, avoiding certain food establishments and supporting others. A large minority in the UK may feel trapped in terms of food choices,



Farmers market in Havana

Photo: Fernando Funes-Monzote

but many of us could prioritise spending more on organic veg.

However, "consumer choice" is also partly a red herring, putting the onus on civil society which is bombarded with multimillion pounds worth of advertising. Change could clearly be brought about more rapidly if there were tighter regulations on food processing (take the current issue around sugar tax as an example), or if the "polluter pays" principle was applied to the farming sector. Then, chemically produced foods would carry a label – perhaps the skull and crossbones – and organic foods would be label-free. Now there's a thought for food! ■



Experimenting with the onion crop

Photo: J. Wright

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Dr Julia Wright has worked in sustainable agricultural development in the UK and internationally, and sits on the Research Advisory Board of the Permaculture Association.

The Heathrow 13: Plane Stupid or Holy Fools?

Westley Ingram reflects on how the Heathrow 13 challenge our views on legitimate protest



Plane Stupid campaigners

Photo: Plane Stupid

On Monday January 25, the 13 members of campaign group Plane Stupid who blockaded Heathrow airport on July 13 2015, were found guilty in Willesden Magistrates Court.¹

In her summing up, the magistrate praised the 13 for their integrity, character and intentions and did not dispute that emissions from aviation would exacerbate climate change. However the disruption caused to thousands of travellers and the cost to the airport was deemed so significant,

that custodial sentences were threatened. However, on returning to court in February, the 13 received suspended sentences as well as other restrictions, perhaps as a result of widespread publicity and support from public figures such as Caroline Lucas and John McDonnell.

It is tempting to consider this court case (and the preceding actions) as a matter of 13 individuals causing inconvenience to thousands and expense to a legitimate corporate entity. But this notion that our lives are

a matter of individuals rationally undertaking discrete interactions is problematic. That view is encouraged by the capitalist mindset – a mindset that in catering to our fragile egos contributes to our ongoing descent into catastrophic and multivariate collapse. I think as Christians we need to resist this worldview.

Presently, Heathrow is the UK's second largest source of CO₂ emissions after DRAX power station.² David Cameron's 2010 pre-election assurance of "no ifs, no buts, no new

runway" is now undone, and the UK is back in line with global trends to increase aviation emissions to account for 22% of world greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This is in no way consistent with the UK's legal obligations under the Climate Change Act. Rather, it is entirely consistent with a planet inhospitable to living things.

The disruption caused to innocent bystanders, and the opprobrium received from them as a result of acts of prophetic resistance, is often a stumbling block for those of us considering non-violent direct action. However, this reasonable and considerate reticence seems more common for Christians than it apparently was for Christ. The most reported, cited and possibly most cinematic example of Jesus' non-violent direct action was the cleansing of the temple. Here we are told that Jesus (possibly with His followers), caused so great a disruption that temple business was stopped (Mk 11:15-16). This happened in the days leading up to the Passover, the national annual festival to which ordinary people would have spent days travelling, costing much time and expense. In addition, this was amongst the highlights of their religious calendar and Jesus blew it for a number of them. Perhaps, preceding His Crucifixion, if His accusers had not opted to charge Him with blasphemy or sedition, someone would have pointed out the disruption He and His followers (perhaps 13 in total) had caused to a lot of innocent bystanders in order to make an ideological point, one moreover they could no doubt have made otherwise, through legitimate avenues.

The fact is Jesus did not consider the inconvenience caused, or the spiritual and emotional distress of "ordinary people" as sufficient to deter Him, and so needs consideration. Amongst other matters we need to remember that the notion of individual morality as we understand it did not really exist then and arguably ought not to exist today in its current form. The notion that the just society is made up of just

individuals is very self-indulgent and is the cause and effect of a great deal of consumerism: ideological, theological, ethical and moral consumerism. Rather, we need to remember that just individuals are the product of a just society who either improve or degrade societal justice, redefining normal, respectable and then legal behaviour with each generation, and even on a day-to-day basis. Evidence suggests that we have been spiralling downwards for some time. Whether one sets year zero at the industrial revolution, the agricultural revolution, the fall of mankind or similar, we have clearly been at this for a while.

As such the actions of the Heathrow 13 were not those of some individuals imposing their ideology on innocents, but rather should be considered a contrarian component in the feedback loop that has us spiralling towards something like hell on Earth. The dominant component in this feedback loop is the everyday, respectable and legal behaviour consistent with this polite genocide we find ourselves so comfortably implicated in. The problem with the actions of the Heathrow 13 is not the great disruption that they caused, but that there were only 13 of them willing to take stand against a society devoted to self-destruction. It is instructive that we have constructed a society that celebrates troublemakers of the convenient past, but responds to these contemporary actions with jail time.

Regarding the expense caused to Heathrow airport, we Christians need to remember that the gospel is the culmination of the process of liberation and restoration outlined in part in the Jubilee writings of Leviticus 25. Foundational to this is the statement that the Earth is the Lord's (Leviticus 25:23). As such, ultimate rights to land or resources cannot be bought (by an individual or corporate entity), nor can they be bestowed by favour, but everyone is subject to the law of Love as revealed by Jesus Christ. The Heathrow 13 needed to give an account of their actions, but so does Heathrow airport.

Jesus' action overturning tables in the temple would have cost traders, and the institution of the temple money, yet He was unapologetic. The legitimacy of the temple, and the practices of those using it were not beyond question, rather they were beyond His forbearance. Since the role of Heathrow, not only in terms of emissions, but also in terms of commerce and culture, is not consistent with life on Earth, the fact that the Heathrow 13 caused them financial loss may not be cause for concern. We have together constructed a society that assumes Heathrow's legitimacy over these activists. This reveals a preference for power, money and climate chaos that I believe is not in keeping with the example of Jesus Christ.

If what I have said is true, or even half true, then the position of those of us who seek to see the world through Christ-like eyes must be to question this verdict. Our judicial system's treatment of these brave 13 reveals to us what our world has become, and poses a challenge to us as the diaspora of the body of Christ, not of the world, but curiously comfortable in the world. I realise that what I have written is not the majority view of the Church. We all feel called to be good citizens but some under Christ and some under Caesar. For most of us the requirements of these two Lords are indistinguishable. This also serves to reveal us to ourselves.

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Westley Ingram is one of the five members of Christian Climate Action on trial in London on May 31st for painting the Department of Energy and Climate Change in whitewash on the first day of the Paris UN Climate Talks (COP21) last November www.christianclimateaction.wordpress.com



The Cross and climate change

How can our spirituality equip us to confront climate change? **Tanya Jones** considers Dr Jonathan Rowson's talk at the Economics of Hope GC conference in November 2015



Photo: Eduardo Estellez/ Shutterstock

Jonathan Rowson's work is excitingly multi-disciplinary: spirituality, psychology, sociology, economics and biology all inform one another in the work of the Social Brain Centre, where he is director. The Centre is creating imaginative yet grounded ways to approach contemporary issues and dilemmas.

There is no greater dilemma or more urgent issue than climate change. Yet, as Jonathan pointed out, even when the science is utterly credible, the fact of climate change stays incredible for us; a challenge so vast that our rational responses bump up against their limitations and we remain impotent. It may be that spirituality, rather than science, can give us a felt sense of the problem we face? Describing himself as "not really Green or Christian, but close enough to both", Jonathan provided invigorating and challenging insights into how Christian approaches and concepts might help us.

One of the unexpected links between Jonathan's talk and that of Green Party MEP Molly Scott Cato was the issue of death. One of the symptoms Molly identified, as part of the "disenchantment of the world", is a failure to encompass the idea of death.

If, as participants in a growth-obsessed society, we only exist to produce and to consume, then the idea of dying, of no longer being either a consumer or a producer, becomes literally unimaginable. Jonathan's insight was related, drawing a parallel between our ambiguous attitude towards our individual deaths and towards the communal, global self-destruction that is unaddressed climate change. Just as we can both know and choose not to know that we will die, so we are both aware and wilfully ignorant of the existence and escalation of climate change.

But the Christian centrality of Easter, that "very grown-up story" Jonathan called it, is a source of strength and hope in confronting these difficult truths. We already have, at the heart of our tradition, an understanding of suffering and humiliation, and a pattern and promise for how they can be transformed and overcome.

The sacramental narrative of baptism speaks of being thrown into a chaotic, world and finding order and meaning, while that of the eucharist tells us of the centrality of the tangible, of our bodies, and of how the body can be a tool for liberation. Climate change is an attack on our collective body, and we cannot

contain it without acknowledging the vulnerability and resilience which we share.

Prayer, in its sustained attention, holding the gaze of the contemplated with care and patience, is a model for the way we need to consider climate change, deeply and seriously, without turning away to facile distractions and simplistic non-solutions.

The concept of sin, so often what makes the Christian faith appear unsympathetic and anachronistic, makes bitter sense in a world broken by human action and inaction. It describes precisely the unbelievable stupidity of our wreckage of our own planet, our being out of kilter with our own nature and the brokenness, depth and darkness of the world we find ourselves in.

But the Christian faith tells us that sin is not the final word, that there is hope of overcoming the darkness, and that hope is love. Not the watery sentimental kind co-opted by romance, but the "fierce loves", the maternal, the fraternal, the loves that will struggle and work and weep and struggle again for those who need them.

We have the power and the duty to speak boldly and strongly – Jonathan sees the divestment movement as a particular source of optimism, and exactly what Christians should be doing. Every tradition needs to find its own "beating heart" to face the climate challenge. For Christians, perhaps the Cross leads the way, in its juxtaposition of community and transcendence. Now we need, honestly, humbly and courageously, to take up that Cross. ■



Tanya Jones is Green Party candidate for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and blogs at Greenlassie.com. You can listen to all the main talks from the conferences at www.greenchristian.org.uk/archives/10100

The *Shalom* Circle

Reflections on a symbol combining the satisfying beauty of the circle with the biblical wholeness of *Shalom*

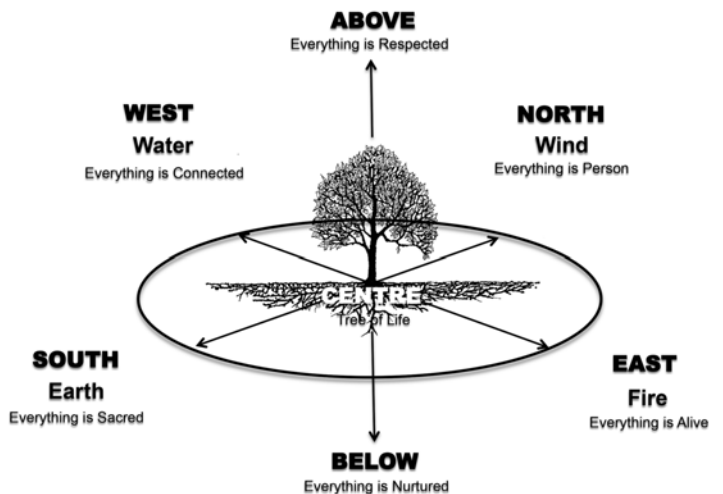
A circle is possibly the most simple and beautifully satisfying shape within the natural world. Many see it as intrinsically perfect, even divine; having neither beginning nor end, it becomes a symbol of infinity and eternity. For thousands of years Indigenous peoples have used circles. For the Animist it speaks of the wholeness of all Creation. It creates a tranquil and stable space within a dynamic world of change and flux. It becomes the place for maintaining the relationships that hold Creation together. The circle is a space-shape for talking, decision-making, worshipping, healing, storytelling, eating, dancing and the many other expressions of spirituality and community. It affirms their equality, and embodies their philosophies, principles and values.

The biblical concept of *shalom* also proclaims the wholeness of all Creation, seeing harmonious relationships between all things as central. *Shalom* requires physical wellbeing, justice and integrity within every cosmic relationship and connection. Relationship is its core: harmonious relationship with God, within ourselves, with other humans and with the whole of wild nature.

Once seated within the circle Indigenous communities acknowledge the four cardinal directions (East, South, West, North), and the four elements (Earth, Wind, Fire, Water) are affirmed. At the centre of the circle there is often a pole, symbolic of the Tree of Life, which adds a further three directions (Centre, Below, Above), making seven in total.

Looking for a symbolic focus to Christian Animism I was reminded of the statement, "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere but whose circumference is nowhere."¹ These words brought to mind the Celtic cross, with a circle surrounding the intersection at the centre, creating its distinctive shape. The cross is of course a powerful symbol of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

If you lay the Celtic cross horizontal, you create a circle with the four cardinal directions clearly set out on the ground. At the centre imagine the Tree of Life, which is itself a symbol of the cross.² Taking the Tree of Life as centre, the remaining directions can each be identified with one of the six principles of Christian Animism:



- **Everything is Alive**
- **Everything is Sacred**
- **Everything is Connected**
- **Everything is Person**
- **Everything is Nurtured**
- **Everything is Respected**

This space-shape is identical to a traditional Indigenous circle, yet thoroughly Christian. It has a structure and meaning that can be described as the *Shalom* Circle.

While a *Shalom* Circle, marked out on the ground, creates a physical space within which many different activities can take place, it also creates a sphere of insight and understanding. Within Western culture we must begin to think differently about the world around us. If we internalize the *Shalom* Circle so that it moulds our perceptions, it becomes an inner spiritual and moral gyroscope as we move through life, making our understandings and responses increasingly sensitive to the possibility of deeper relationships with wild nature and also other persons.

The *Shalom* Circle has other dimensions of understanding that we cannot begin to explore in this brief space, but every aspect can be affirmed biblically and it is supported by the teaching and example of Jesus. ■

Noel Moules

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A Renewed Commitment

In her regular summary of local group activity, **Isobel Murdoch** reflects on fresh hopes, and the challenge Nehemiah knew well, of turning hope into reality

As one group leader observed on my recent calls, there's a "positive vibe" in the green movement in the wake of the Paris talks: and this is mirrored within Green Christian's own groups and local contacts. But still there are conflicting responses, as there remains the struggle to turn all this hope into reality: a contradiction Nehemiah knew well.

As cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was close to the reins of power, but his own request to the King was rooted in faith and prayer. The Paris agreement now recedes and we need perseverance, on this journey of a million miles. Nehemiah too faced opposition and conflict (Neh 4:7–8) - but he persevered and he responded. Far from closing his eyes to the conflicts, he set himself to defend the builders and to inspire them (Neh 4:13-14, 19-20). Every one of the many gates and sections of the wall was repaired, with doors and bolts. And as the dust settled, Nehemiah as governor oversaw some 49,942 exiles as they moved to their land, alongside 8,136 horses, camels and other animals.

While the Paris talks lay still in the future, they inspired specific events. The **Shrewsbury** group attended the Reconciling A Wounded Planet conference, where they promoted the Rubbish Diet. The group's coordinator, Howard, then walked from Trafalgar Square to the Arc de Triomphe on the Pilgrimage2Paris, an inspiring 200 mile walk of fellowship. **Hereford** GC

members attended a climate change talk to mark the COP21 negotiations, and **Bristol's** leader held a French-themed LOAF meal in his Church.

And there's a sense that the talks have spawned a renewed commitment amidst individuals and groups.

Shrewsbury and **Milton Keynes** leaders mentioned active green scenes in their towns, with a new Shrewsbury Climate Coalition now formed to which the GC group will contribute. One idea is to form a hub to tackle food waste.

Just as the Paris talks mark a new phase in climate negotiations, so Bristol now moves on at the end of the city's year as European Green Capital. The **Bristol** GC group has a new Mission Statement, recognising the city's industrial past and present economic importance, and looking to the future.

The **Leighton Buzzard** group was first formed eight years ago and following a quieter time has now held a relaunch through Churches Together. One plan is to screen the film *This Changes Everything*, which the **Clun** group will also be screening soon. The **Leighton Buzzard** group contact's Church is organising an all-day churchyard event, from Morning Prayer listening to the dawn chorus to bat-detecting at dusk with Evening Prayer to close.

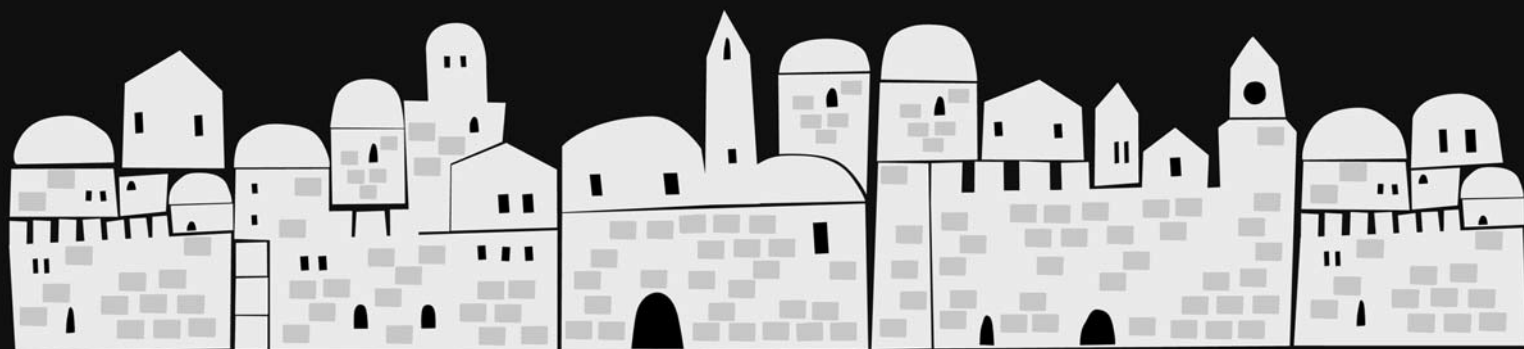
In prayer Nehemiah was open, confessing sin, and Biblical, quoting God's commandments. He prayed time

and again, and as he listened to God, so he knew that God would see the initiative through (Neh 2:18 and 20a). Prayer was mentioned several times in my calls to GC groups. The **Bristol** group contact is organising a prayer walk every three months in different green spaces in the city, an informal opportunity to gather, talk and pray. **Leighton Buzzard's** group will have a prayer vigil when the Paris agreement is ratified this year. They also hope to publicise and distribute GC's monthly prayer diary in local churches. And the **Reading** group contact set up prayer stations in the Minster Church for a green day organised by the Bishop of Reading, on environmental themes.

Lincoln's GC contact has formed a group which is organising a "Faith and the Environment" day conference on May 7 at Edward King House, next to Lincoln Cathedral, with the keynote talk by Ruth Valerio and other talks on themes from marine biodiversity to theology to agriculture. To book a free place email LSAdmin@lincoln.anglican.org or ring 07900 038706. I plan to attend this.

Clun's group will organise another Green Weekend in June, this time on the theme of Creator and Creation, with funds going to support the work of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

One group which helped organise a performance of the Paris-inspired Riding Lights comedy last winter was **Milton Keynes**. This year in April, they held a



Big Shift workshop on divestment from fossil fuels, and are also visiting Ryton Organic Gardens on May 21st. See <http://mkceg.org.uk> for more details.

Some groups support diverse organisations. Another recent relaunch – Ecocongregation to Eco Church – has inspired new interest, and several groups which have gained Ecocongregation awards may try for Eco Church. The **Norwich Diocese Environment Group** is publicizing EcoChurch across the diocese, and GC's **Hampshire** local contact told me of an ecumenical Church plant in Fleet which has become the first Eco Church in the area. GC's local contact in **Worcestershire** is active in two Transition groups. In the winter the **St Ives** group held an event to support toilet-twinning, and this spring they held a talk by an A Rocha board member on

green theology and A Rocha's new wildlife haven Fox Earth.

Hereford's group leader circulates a bimonthly e-newsletter to publicise green events and initiatives, and **Clun's** group leader writes a monthly "Green Tip" for the Clun Chronicle. The **Andover** group meets occasionally for social gatherings and to pool ideas. Churchyard working parties maintain All Saints Churchyard in **Clifton** (Bedfordshire) for wildlife, and the Church is very supportive of local businesses and farmers.

Two GC group leaders will be talking about Green Christian's work this spring: **Reading's** leader will address a Catholic group which has organised talks inspired by Mark Dowd's "God Is Green", and **Cheltenham's** leader will talk to a meeting in Charlton Kings.

Nehemiah's mission from the Persian court to rebuild Jerusalem in the 5th century BC may seem a world away from 21st century AD climate negotiations – but the contradictions, the controversies, the hopes and fears mirror one another. There were still struggles and troubles for the returned exiles – "Here we are, slaves to this day" (9:36) – but they were set aside for a while as the rebuilt city walls were dedicated with music and song, and with a new agreement before God (Neh 9:38-10:39, 12:27). Nehemiah would return to King Artaxerxes and then again to Jerusalem, when more reforms would be needed. We are called to perseverance, to renewed commitment, to build on the positive news as we walk the way of hope.

Isobel Murdoch
01790 763 603



GC NEWS



Christian Climate Action calls for a cloud of witnesses for the defence

On November 30th 2015, the first day of the Paris UN climate talks (COP21), five members of Christian Climate Action (CCA) painted the Department of Energy and Climate Change in whitewash and renamed it the Department for Extreme Climate Change in black paint.

CCA's aim was to evoke the words of Christ, "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of deadmen's bones and everything unclean....on the outside you are



appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (from Matthew 23:27-28) and to highlight the government's fine words on climate change while they enact policies to worsen it.

The five will face charges of criminal damage in Hammersmith Magistrates' Court on May 31 st 2016. They ask supporters and well-wishers to join them in prayer on the day of trial. A vigil will be held outside the court during the trial from 9am.

Details:
<https://christianclimateaction.wordpress.com/may-31st-a-cloud-of-witnesses/>

Cumbrian Floods

In early December one month's rainfall in one day, falling on already saturated ground led to extensive flooding in Cumbria. GC member John Smith reports that Churches and the wider community have responded to extensive flooding which at its height in Carlisle was a foot higher than in 2009. John lives on a hill and his lawn was still a quagmire weeks later.

Disruption of transport has been a major issue. The A591 which is the main route from Kendal to Keswick was blocked and several bridges on key routes have been lost adding to problems of isolation and uncertainty.

Before these floods Cumbria Environmental Group had written a Green Liturgy as a response to a four week course on environmental issues. This was being used on the afternoon with the wildest weather by a

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congregation at Nether Denton, one of the area's most isolated churches.

The Churches have responded well as has the wider community. Help is being provided through gifts, prayer and support. The original aim for the community fund was £1m and it is now £3m. The dry up will take at least six months if not more and covers a wider area than in 2009.

The challenges of the cleanup are being faced by the community but there is much concern that flooding will again hit what are mainly Victorian houses built on flood plains.

John commented that the Cumbria Environment Group have been writing and preaching about climate change since 1990. It is difficult to remain optimistic about how this challenge is being addressed.

Free digital membership for ordinands and ministers in training goes online

Green Christian is offering free two year digital membership to people who are in full time training to be ministers / priests (Ordinands). Digital members are full members of Green Christian and receive the magazine in digital rather than in paper form. This offer is for a limited period only and we have nearly 50 signed up so far.

Prayer pack on TTIP and trade justice launched

Green Christian is a supporter of the new Prayer pack on TTIP and trade justice launched for Churches and Christian groups from Global Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement). The pack includes Bible Studies, Liturgy ideas, prayers and actions. It is available to download from www.globaljustice.org.uk

Xistence project update

Green Christian's Xistence Project is about identifying how GC can best address the needs of younger people in the 20-40 age range. After a period of research and the piloting of a wider range of ideas to engage younger people the Xistence project team made its recommendations to the GC Steering Committee in January.

Working with the project team, the Steering Committee has generated its Xistence Implementation Plan and over the coming months this will prompt developments across a range of GC's operations.

The successful pilot projects Growing Them Green, a Facebook group for green parents and the Penpal project, which pairs up younger people with more mature GC members, are to be sustained. A structured review of how GC communicates with members and those who have yet to join forms another part of the response to Xistence.

GC will seek to develop more formal relationships with like-minded organisations working with younger people and to take part in events which younger people attend. Making GC events more family-friendly is another area we hope members will notice progress.

Eco Church

Our friends at A Rocha UK launched their Eco Church awards at St Paul's Cathedral in January. Eco Church is a new award scheme which is designed to equip Churches to express their care for God's world in worship and teaching; in how they look after buildings and land; in how they engage with the local community and in global campaigns, and in the personal lifestyles of congregation members.

Churches already recognised as Eco-congregations will find much that is familiar in Eco Church. Green Christian's ecocell programme is a useful resource for Churches working towards Eco Church awards and for those of us on a pilgrimage towards sustainable living in our personal lives.

Annual Members Meeting 2016

Green Christian Annual Members' Meeting will be held at 2pm, on Saturday 5 November, at St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1TA. Doors open from 1pm. Bring your own lunch, drinks provided.

Green Christian Retreat – Still Places?

By now the Noddfa 2016 Retreat may be fully booked, but there are often last minute cancellations. We suggest before sending an application form that you email bookings@greenchristian.org.uk to see if any places are available. If you do not have access to e-mail please telephone the Bookings Secretary on 01332 773117, leaving a message if no reply.

The Green Christian Way of Life – Finding our Path and Walking Gently Together

On January 30th, 35 members of Green Christian shared an excellent day of thinking, prayer and discussion exploring further the developing "Green Christian Way of Life". The Way was described as:

- An offering to believers where care for God's Creation in all its forms is a fundamental outworking of their faith.
- A calling for deeper engagement and shared encouragement across a diverse and dispersed community.

Followers of the Way would come together as "Companions" aiming to follow four spiritual disciplines: daily prayer and devotions; living gently on the earth; public action or witness and encouragement.

Chris Walton encouraged us to be intentional about how we travel together as "Green Pilgrims". George Dow reminded us that "Companions" are those who come together to share bread. Deborah Tomkins shared her reflections on our need to be deeply rooted like a vine and grafted to Jesus the vine without whom we cannot do anything. Euan McPhee gave us insight into the challenges and crucially the rewards of simple living, and that to live gently on the Earth is a moving target, a quest that never ends.

Throughout the day we were led in prayer and reflection by Deirdre Munro using the Green Christian monthly prayer guide. Barbara Echlin, taking some of George Marshall's ideas from

his latest book (*Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*), helped us to reflect on effective forms of public action taken in everyday conversations. In these daily interactions we have the opportunity to talk about climate change through the use of personal and positive storytelling.

Discussions between participants throughout the day included sharing ideas for living gently and for public action and the beginnings of some very important discussions about how we can support and encourage each other.

We are indeed a dispersed community being called to deeper engagement in our love and care for Creation and that a crucial part of this calling is how we "encourage" one another – something more than simply sharing ideas and resources. It will need to include: mutual support, attentive listening, loving care, appreciation of each other's efforts, celebration of our successes and challenge and forgiveness in the face of our failures.

The Way of Life working group is now looking to set up a website and Facebook page and consider how best to enable communications between Companions, signposting resources, future gatherings etc.

So please look out for further postings on Green Christian website. Should you wish to find out more about Green Christian's Way of Life please contact georgedow@greenchristian.org.uk

Tim Suiter

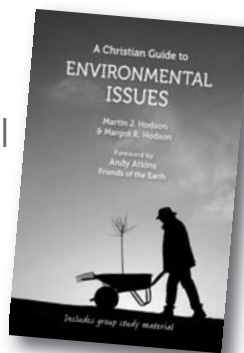
A Christian guide to environmental issues

By Martin J. Hodson and Margot R. Hodson
September 2015
Bible Reading Fellowship
ISBN 978-0-85746-383-8
228 pages
RRP £9.98 (paperback),
£8.33 (kindle)

A Church Bible study group would find this book a very user-friendly basis for 10 sessions. It focuses on key issues for environmental sustainability and provides up to date information in an accessible form. At the end of each section, a practical "ecotip" is offered and then some Bible study notes. Equally it would repay careful use by an individual.

The book assumes a mainstream, biblically-founded Christian perspective, but examines the issues honestly and realistically. Martin Hodson is a plant scientist and environmental biologist who writes and speaks widely. Margot is now vicar of St Mary's Haddenham but has also taught environmental ethics at Oxford Brookes University. References to the Hodsons' personal experiences make the book a thoroughly accessible and enjoyable read. They wrote most of it while enjoying a time of sabbatical leave together in 2014 visiting Spain and Portugal as supporters of A Rocha, and also write about their involvement with the John Ray Initiative.

So we picture them taking the ferry to Spain where the beauty of the landscape shines through, sweetening the serious data and hard questions. For example, in reflecting on much needed environmental action, the Hodsons vividly describe amazing sunrises in the Alpujarra Mountains; the autumn sun's rising makes an ever changing pink and golden backdrop to the mountains, seeming to set the whole sky on fire, and this speaks to them of Christ's resurrection and the hope we must yet have for our environment.

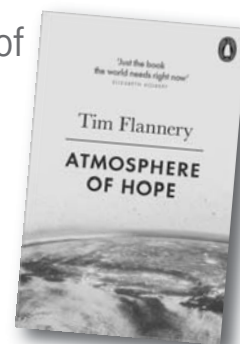


This hope they cherish is striking. In a prologue they tell how one day, walking through an Andalucian chestnut forest, the wind made it sound as if the trees truly "clapped their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). Others might have expected signs of mourning, looking for indications of disease and stunted growth, in any European forest. But there is a strong biblical optimism here, affirming that Creation is good. They state, "The present threat of out-of-control climate change comes from the actions of humans and not God", while assuring us that God himself "is moving Creation towards an ultimate fulfilment". This may raise difficult questions. Yet we are left with the challenge that God "does not expect humanity to take a 'passive role'", and the "gospel imperative to active engagement with the world". The Hodsons do admit to times of discouragement, but ultimately come to realise that, "the beginning of real hope is the surrendering of unrealistic hope. The beginning of hope is to have a positive realism about what can be achieved."

Andrew Norman

Atmosphere of Hope: Solutions to the Climate Crisis

by Tim Flannery
Oct 2015
Penguin
ISBN 978-0141981048
288 pages
£7.99



For anyone wanting to be brought up to date with the challenges and real solutions to Climate Change, this is a very useful book that's readable, short and authoritative. Professor Tim Flannery is a world-renowned climate scientist, for three years head of the Australian Climate Commission till 2013 when disbanded by the incoming Abbot government. It rose again as an even more effective Climate Council with 1 million A\$ of crowd-funding.

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The power of the concerned public activated through social media is one of the hopeful signs and positive influences to counterbalance gloom and doom.

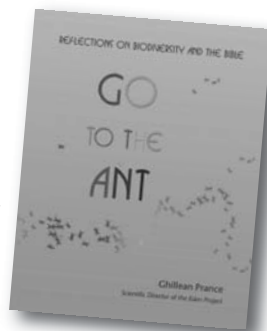
No punches are pulled about the urgency and size of the problem. We're sensitive to flooding in the UK, but the Australian viewpoint is interestingly focused on heat waves: the 2014 Australian Tennis Open in Melbourne cancelled, Adelaide experiencing 13 days above 40°C compared with two days average, with many excess deaths caused. Long droughts, extra lightning and stronger winds all contribute to more frequent forest fires. Signs of hope are even found here because more people are now convinced that climate change denial is illogical.

Solutions are usually a weaker part of climate films and books but Tim really has the big picture. For those who like data, there is plenty to back up the arguments as to what must be done to keep the planet viable. For example, 80% of proven fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground; in this divestment is a new powerful tool because even climate deniers want to avoid their wealth being tied up in a shrinking asset. Another hopeful sign is the unexpectedly fast development rate and plummeting costs of technology: wind and solar, electric vehicles. These will accelerate as China is committed to expanding "clean tech". If the US and China adopted each other's current best practices then their 2030 targets would be amazingly improved. Powerful technology is available now but more is needed. And Tim believes in a "third way", enhancing the natural world's capacity to absorb CO₂ through for example the soil and algae.

The need to offer hope as a motivator rather than fear of future disasters has gradually seeped into the green activist community. As Christians we should surely recognise the need and value of well-grounded hope as is found in this book.

Mark Hancock

Go To The Ant: reflections on biodiversity and the Bible



by Sir Ghilleen Prance
March 2013
Wild Goose Publications
ISBN 978-1-84952-219-9
112 pages
RRP £10.50 (paperback), £6.50 (downloadable book)

This is a good reflective book with 50 short passages for meditative consideration. Each begins with a Bible verse, from Genesis to Revelation, that includes animal, insect or plant life; this is followed by information, anecdotes from Ghilleen Prance's extensive experience, and spiritual connections. All of these draw our attention to environmental issues in the context of God's big book of Creation. So we learn about how the ant community works for the common good, as did the Israelites when Nehemiah exhorted them to rebuild the city walls, and are reminded of the imperative to work together today in the face of the environmental crisis. We read of Native Americans who discussed the environmental consequences of their actions to the seventh generation, and in relation to the Psalms, we learn about the abundance of water, linked however with the unusual droughts in the Amazon region and the resulting problems in local communities.

I particularly liked the story of the pequia tree whose flowers rise above the crown of the tree to be pollinated by bats, and of the pollination of a couratari tree at precisely 5.30am each morning by a large bee. All through the book we are reminded of the effect of human activity on other animals, plants, trees, water, everything. But we are also turned in imaginative and refreshing ways towards God the Creator, assured of forgiveness and hope.

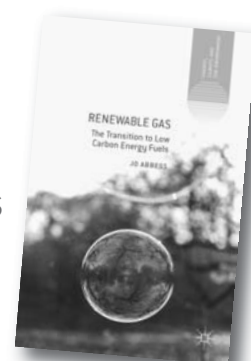
I did find myself reflecting on the level of travel involved for so many of the stories, and wishing for some connection to be made between travel and climate change; just once would have been enough, though I acknowledge that we did not know the damage our fuels caused for most of the author's working life so no blame belongs there. We do know now though, yet travel in general still seems to increase year on year. Perhaps the fact that the book stimulated such thoughts shows that it succeeds in promoting the needs of all of Creation.

This would be an excellent book to read daily during Creationtide, or in the usually ignored, great 50 days of Easter; we need the resurrection energy for these important environmental issues. It would also be a good book to give to friends who are casual about, or in denial of, environmental issues.

Chris Polhill

(Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance is a patron of Green Christian.)

Renewable Gas: The Transition to Low Carbon Energy Fuels



By Jo Abbess
September 2015
Palgrave
Macmillan
ISBN 978-113744-179-9
296 pages
RRP £68.00 (hardcover, also available as e-book)

The author defines renewable gas as "a range of low net carbon emissions gas energy fuels". It is sustainable biogas, produced to achieve a similar quality to fossil natural gas. Jo Abbess takes very seriously the reality of peak oil and likewise the parallel reality of peak gas; these twin realities will inevitably mean a transition period as world energy supplies are forced to

move from fossil fuels to alternative sources. Like all beautiful theories, her thesis is very simple. Surplus energy generated at times of low demand may be used to produce renewable gas, which may then be stored (in ways not always possible for electricity) and distributed via existing infrastructure for natural gas. Thus it will be possible to sustain energy supplies even as fossil fuels decline.

Jo takes as axiomatic the inevitability of climate change and the necessity of reducing carbon emissions. She points out that development and construction times for nuclear power generating plants is too long for nuclear to play a useful role in time for the crunch points, as energy production from fossil fuels declines. She offers an alternative academically-robust, scientifically-sound and economically realistic defence of the use of Renewable Gas as the vital bridging source when the twin drivers of climate change and dwindling fossil fuel resources place increasing demands on the need to find other sources of energy. She also considers the importance of investment in alternative technologies, to make them efficient and practicable.

Jo's vision is global. She envisages that "the ambitions of countries could align if a gas-and-power strategy is pursued, and this could enable improved international relations going forward" (p177). In its advocacy of the urgent need to develop Renewable Gas as a way of assisting countries to achieve their carbon reduction targets, this is an important and timely book. Green Christians owe it to themselves and to the Church to be as informed as possible about the implications of climate change and our energy needs, in order that we may engage in the debate and speak with integrity and conviction. The book will enable us to do precisely that and we are in the debt of scientific writers like Jo Abbess for their willingness to offer solutions to the reality of fuel insecurity: her thesis offers hope.

The Rev'd Canon Donald C Macdonald

(Jo Abbess is Green Christian's former Information Officer.)

The Age of Sustainable Development

By Jeffrey D. Sachs
April 2015
Columbia University Press
ISBN 978-0-23117-315-5
544 pages
RRP £23.95 (paperback)



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed in September 2015. The 17 goals and 169 targets set an agenda for "transforming the world" by 2030, by ending poverty and hunger, protecting the planet from degradation, ensuring all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives, and fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence. No one is better qualified to engage with the complexity of this transformation than Jeffrey Sachs, economics professor, advisor to governments around the world and especially to Kofi Annan and now Ban Ki-moon (who wrote the book's forward).

In *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Sachs argues that sustainable development is the greatest, most complicated challenge humanity has ever faced. If we do not face up to the challenge peacefully, equitably and urgently, the necessary changes will be forced on us by ecological disruptions in coming decades.

What is needed is: first, a careful analysis of the complex interaction of the ecological and human systems on which we depend, and second, proposals for practical action at local, governmental and international levels. Sachs offers both in this brilliantly clear and accessible book; the scope is broad, the scholarship deep, the importance huge.

Sachs describes the needed analysis as a "science of complex systems", involving the global economy (and the scourge of extreme poverty), social systems and institutions (inequality, social mobility, discrimination, social cohesion), our environmental life-support (living within planetary boundaries), and the problems of governance (including

the implications for democracy of the huge lobbying power of multinational companies).

Is it possible to reconcile the continued growth of the world economy with the sustainability of Earth's ecosystems, growing population and diminishing biodiversity? Controversially Sachs believes that choosing the right technologies and radically reshaping the world's economic institutions will enable us to achieve continued growth while honouring planetary boundaries. This is the hope of political and business leaders, but there must be serious doubt about the feasibility of this belief. Whether Sachs takes human sin and selfishness seriously enough is a question. He certainly does not give as much attention as Joseph Stiglitz (*The Price of Inequality*) to the failure of political institutions in reshaping our current damaging economic structures.

Much of the book is given to practical policy proposals. Sachs aims for a broad-based prosperity, eliminating discrimination, empowering women in the work force and in their reproductive health. He argues for investment in education at all levels – particularly in the poorest countries – and sets out a 10-point plan for investment in health. Changes to industrial agricultural practice and creating a sustainable farm system will be required for a world of 9-11 billion people to feed itself. With more than half of the world's population living in cities, Sachs also provides pointers for creating more resilient cities. There are major chapters on climate change and the urgency of ceasing our dependence on fossil fuels; and on biodiversity, including deforestation, in the face of major species extinctions.

Sachs concludes with a look forward to the SDGs, of which he was a major architect. If these goals truly represent the political will of the world's leaders, what is needed now is action.

Rev Dr David Atkinson

*Reviews and resources
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The Earth Will Teach You

By Kevin Durrant
September 2014
Wide Margin Books
186 pages
ISBN 978-190886-007-1
RRP £9.99



It is not often that the title of a book so accurately describes its contents, and in words of one syllable too. Kevin Durrant takes his theme from the book of Job: “..ask the animals and they will teach you, or the birds of the air and they will tell you, or speak to the earth and it will teach you”(Job 12:7,8). Using biblical passages to great effect Durrant unwraps the stories making theological connections between them and the harsh realities of our ecological crisis.

He begins with the bizarre story of Balaam's donkey from the Book of Numbers and his interpretation is a gem, linking it with the threatened giant tortoises of the Galapagos. He goes on to use the “protective tree” from Daniel chapter 4, the reference to the soil from Genesis chapter 2, the snake from chapter 3, the exhausted land from Leviticus chapter 25. These and many others are used to demonstrate how the natural world itself can speak to us and in a very real sense be the word of God for our generation.

There are problems however. Durrant acknowledges that the book began life as a series of sermons. This has led to some tiresome aspects, such as excessive references to biblical passages presumably from the service readings, when just one key passage would have sufficed. Another annoying habit is to use headings (inspiration, motivation, wisdom in one chapter, hospitality, honour, hope in another) which seem forced though may have been appropriate to the spoken word.

Having said that, there is wonderful and exciting material in this book. In the chapter on the “Sacred Oak” there is a very useful section on a sacramental

approach to nature. Poetry is included to great effect: Wordsworth, Gerard Manley Hopkins, R.S. Thomas and lesser known ones too. Also painters such as Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer and Caspar David Friedrich. Not only does this enrich the book and point to the value of art in this context, but also indicates how personal the book is. Durrant is describing a journey of discovery which we can share and this makes the book a pleasure to read. Despite the sermonising there is a freshness here and much to be learnt.

Peter Dodd

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret (2014)

www.cowspiracy.com

Directors: Kip Anderson, Keegan Kuhn
90 mins
Download for \$4.95 (£3.46)



This documentary film has an easy narrative style, emotive imagery and clever animations which are used to illustrate a heap of data on animal agriculture. It's a huge internet hit and has convinced thousands of people to become vegan, or vegetarian. If you are a meat eater, or simply enjoy a nice bit of Stilton, by the end you could find yourself, like me, resolving to change your diet.

The likable narrator, Kip Anderson, takes us with him around the US to investigate farming and its environmental effects. His stark message: animal agriculture is the main contributor to climate change, uses a third of the world's fresh water and appropriates 45% of the earth's landmass. So he goes to talk to environmental organisations – the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Oceanea, Rainforest Action Network, Amazon Watch, asks them about climate change and catches them on the back foot. You see his interviewees squirming and stifling their annoyance, as they focus on fossil fuel usage, and this friendly guy quietly asks them what's their message on animal methane emissions, water usage,

habitat loss due to animal feed crops, or ocean pollution from nitrogenous fertilizers.

He visits farms too, finding organic dairy farms not as green and pleasant as he hoped, saves a chicken from becoming roast dinner, patting it gently as he takes it home in his VW camper. Even grass-fed beef is not a sustainable option apparently as Kip works out that the entire North American landmass would have to be covered in pasture to feed the US with it (but that's with each person consuming 210 lb a year!) It gets darkly entertaining when he visits representatives of the meat industry and exposes their ignorance and denial. Kip has a lot of nagging feelings about the silence around animal-related GHG emissions; is it a conspiracy?

I also had nagging feelings about the accuracy of Kip's data. Cowspiracy's biggest punch, that 51% of global Greenhouse Gas emissions derive from animal agriculture is based on one analysis (2007 World Watch). This estimate is way above other reputable sources, which give a range of 10-35% of global GHG emissions for all animal agriculture and related activity¹. Admittedly even this more conservative figure indicates the importance of reducing our meat and dairy intake.

The film would be a lot less entertaining if it had ditched the conspiracy angle and presented diet and the farming system as only part of a range of behavioural and technological changes needed for a sustainable culture. “Save the world – just change your diet!” is a simple message made attractive by the film's firm advocacy of the health benefits and animal friendliness of a vegetable diet. Cowspiracy is possibly producing a lot of smug vegans who think that eating lentil burgers solves all problems, and also turning off others by being too obviously polemical. But it gets full marks for making food politics a lively issue, and veganism trendy.

1e.g. the UN Environment Programme's 2012 report and the 2014 IPCC report.
Also see: <https://www.quora.com/How-accurate-is-the-movie-Cowspiracy>

Clare Redfern

When the earth is sick and dying,
There will come a tribe of people
From all races...
Who will put their faith in deeds,
Not words, and make the planet
Green again...

(Cree Prophecy)

Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.
Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.

(Ute Prayer)

May the sun bring you new energy by day,
may the moon softly restore you by night,
may the rain wash away your worries,
may the breeze blow new strength into your being,
may you walk gently through the world and
know it's beauty all the days of your life.

(Apache Blessing)

all from World Healing prayers
(<http://www.worldhealingprayers.com>)

Holy Spirit, making life alive,
Moving in all things, root of all creative being,
Cleansing the cosmos of every impurity,
Effacing guilt, anointing sounds.
You are lustrous and praiseworthy life.
You waken and re-awaken everything that is.

(from the 12th-century mystic, Hildegard of Bingen)

Do Not Walk Proudly On The Earth

(A meditation based on sura 17:37 of the Qur'an)

"Do not walk proudly on the earth..."
Remember that we are her children, born of her
forests, plains and seas.

"Do not walk proudly on the earth..."
Remember that her rivers give us life, flowing from
white mountains and green hills to water our fields and our cities.

"Do not walk proudly on the earth..."
Remember her offspring, sharers and partners with us
in the web of creation, manifestations of the infinite variety.

"Do not walk proudly on the earth..."
Remember her people, our sisters and brothers in
humanity, yearning for peace and plenty, life and liberty.

"Do not walk proudly on the earth..."
May our steps be modest, walking with those who cherish the earth,
protecting her from desecration and her people from tyranny.

May there be balance and harmony on the earth,
and may we not walk proudly upon her.

(from *The Way of the Pilgrim*, Cliff Reed (1993), with permission)



Celebrating body and soul: how our bodies can save the world.

10-12 June 2016

Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, North Wales.

Some time to reflect on the importance of our bodies as sites for radical change in ourselves, and in the world through spiritual practices and "coming home" to ourselves and all Creation.

Revd Dr Keith Hebden is a parish priest, author and activist in the diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. He writes and teaches on Christian anarchism, community organising, nonviolent resistance and social and environmental justice issues.



By now the Noddfa 2016 Retreat may be fully booked, but there are often last minute cancellations. We suggest before sending an application form that you email bookings@greenchristian.org.uk to see if any places are available. If you do not have access to e-mail please telephone the Bookings Secretary on 01332 773117, leaving a message if no reply.



Join Now

If you wish to become a member of Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link) or subscribe to *Green Christian the magazine only*, please fill in this form and send with your remittance to: Green Christian Membership, Richard and Nicky Kierton, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS

To join online, visit www.greenchristian.org.uk

Please tick:

- ☐ Standard Membership £30
- ☐ Concessionary Rate (low income) £12
- ☐ Joint/Family/Corporate £40
- ☐ *Green Christian* (the magazine only) £20
- ☐ Church Membership (recommended) £40

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

(GC81)

Coming up in the next issue...

We're already working on the next *Green Christian Magazine*, and we'd like your help.

Our next issue will be exploring the links between Christianity, creativity and the environment.

We'd love to find out about any of your creative endeavors but are particularly interested in receiving:

- Drawings or paintings
- Cartoons
- Poems
- Short stories

Digital art and music that we can host on our website.

We'd also love to hear from you if you'd like to write or be interviewed about how you are inspired by faith and ecology.

For more information or to share your work, please email us on editors@greenchristian.org.uk



GreenChristian