

had to take significant steps to address them.

Thursday 31st March

In a project run by Zero Waste Scotland, 16 restaurants in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Irvine and East Kilbride have provided “Good to Go” boxes for customers’ leftovers. 42% of diners used the boxes and 92% reported eating the leftovers later. Research has shown that if all Scottish restaurants offered the boxes, it could save the equivalent of 800,000 meals going into the bin each year. Across the UK as a whole, food waste from the food service sector is projected to rise this year to a value of £3 billion. Scotland’s “Good to Go” boxes are clearly needed elsewhere in the UK.

Sources:

“Plato’s Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology” by William Ophuls. WWF News.

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Picture on front cover: Umbelifer by Malham Tarn, by Judith Allinson

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Prayer guide for the care of creation March 2016



“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24.1)

“This is the famous stone that turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.” (George Herbert)

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
For the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”
(Proverbs 31.8 & 9)

Tuesday 1st March

“All previous civilisations have exploited the natural world, usually self-destructively, but they have never attempted to deny natural necessity or to stand apart from nature, much less over it. By contrast industrial civilisation has gloried in its ability to bend the so-called external world to its will. This will to power over nature is the essence of modern hubris – an overweening end that is pursued by excessively rational means and driven by irrational urges. . . . So modern hubris originates in irrational dread (of nature) and manifests as an unlimited war against nature for wealth, power and dominion.” (*William Ophuls in “Plato’s Revenge”*)

Wednesday 2nd March

The current over-supply and low cost of oil is a short-term phenomenon that must sooner or later lead to a shortage in oil supplied when demand picks up. According to Ophuls: “Well before fossil fuels are finally exhausted, the capital costs of exploitation will be exorbitant, the net energy yield

minimal and the environmental costs unbearable. When this happens, civilisation will once again have to rely on diffuse energy sources that lack the energy density needed to sustain an economy based on concentrated resources. A civilisation based on diffuse energy cannot have the same shape as one based on concentrated energy.”

Thursday 3rd March

As for oil, supplies of fresh water are finite, yet demand for it is growing to the extent that almost everywhere fossil water is being mined to support a burgeoning population. “In short, a human economy based on money is colliding with a natural economy rooted in the laws of thermodynamics. Everywhere we turn, the human race is living beyond its means, disrupting or even destroying the natural systems that are the matrix of human life and depleting in a generation the capital stocks accumulated over millennia. Humanity does not stand apart from

- for those who have lost opportunities,
- for those who have lost their faith, and
- for all who have been wounded in the battle of life and are near to despair.

Give us all a vision of Christ's risen glory, that we too may trust in his power; that we too may know that nothing can separate us from your loving purposes and nothing can finally defeat your will. Amen.

Monday 28th March

Mozambique was formerly one of the most mined countries in the world as a result of the civil war which lasted from 1877 to 1992. Now the country has been declared entirely free of landmines. Scotland-based charity the Halo Trust was instrumental in clearing 171,000 mines in a 22-year campaign. Halo Trust CEO James Cowan has urged the world to strive for a mine-free world by 2025.

Tuesday 29th March

The Paris Climate Agreement made no reference to aircraft emissions

despite the fact that international aviation emits more CO₂ than the 129 poorest countries in the world added together. The UN International Civil Aviation Organisation will meet next October to finalise measures to cap net emissions from international flights at 2020 levels. WWF comments: “We can't keep global temperatures below a 1.5 degrees C. unless international aviation does its fair share to cut emissions.”

Wednesday 30th March

Government figures have shown that getting 75% of lakes, rivers and wetlands into good health would boost the economy by £8.5 billion. Yet new targets published by the Environment Agency show that by 2021 it intends only 21% of water bodies to be in a healthy state. Farming is responsible for nearly a third of the pressures on water bodies such as pollution from farmland and taking too much water from already stressed rivers. WWF claims that the Government has failed to work with farmers to tackle these issues, whereas the water industry, also a big polluter, has

Thursday 24th March

Frugality is not the same as stinginess or asceticism. It is the art of making as little as possible go as far as possible. It fits perfectly with “usufruct”, which is the use and enjoyment of property or resources without damaging or depleting their worth, so that they remain permanently useful. Frugality entails a total transformation of economic theory and practice, so that we husband matter and energy with extraordinary care, using labour-intensive production allied to appropriate technology to convert limited resources into valued goods.

Friday 25th March. Good Friday.

Loving Father, as on this solemn day we bow at the foot of the Cross, may your love that was shown there flood into our hearts, challenging them and winning from us that response which is your will and purpose for us. This we pray in the Name of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Saturday 26th March

“My prayer is not for them (the disciples) alone. I pray also for those

who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one.”(John 17. 20 & 21)

Lord, we praise and bless you for recent signs that Christians are responding to your call for unity. We thank you for recent meetings between churches that were once bitterly divided, and we pray that a joint message may emerge that will unite all Christians in a new determination to turn away from destructive consumerism and to embrace a simpler lifestyle that will protect your creation.

Sunday 27th March. Easter Day.

Dear Lord and Father, by whose power Christ was raised from the dead, so that the worst that men could do had no power over him, lay your hand in loving tenderness on all who need this message most. We pray especially

- for those who have lost their dear ones and whose hearts are sad,
- for those who have lost their health and vitality,
- for those who have lost their livelihood,

nature, We exist because of it.”
(*William Ophuls*)

Friday 4th March

Our heritage of former hunter-gatherers makes us sensitive to immediate dangers, but comparatively oblivious to long-term risks. “Our attention is not grabbed by the creeping destruction of habitat, the imperceptible extinction of species, the continual accumulation of pollutants, the gradual loss of topsoil, the steady depletion of aquifers etc. We rather tend to fixate on dramatic symptoms such as the occasional major oil spill while ignoring the far greater threat posed by, for example, the daily dribble of petrochemicals from a multiplicity of sources, which is far more damaging in the long-term. It takes a crisis to thrust stealthy perils into full awareness.” (*William Ophuls*)

Saturday 5th March

Ophuls suggests that humans seek a meaning to the world in metaphorical images, models and stories. “Without an emotionally

satisfying story, the average human simply has no answer to the riddle of life and death. Many desperately cast about for a simple solution – the overthrow of capitalism, the forced conversion of infidels, the war to end all wars etc.” Christians have that story in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We surely need to pass this on to our children and our neighbours.

Sunday 6th March

Lord, we pray that your people, whether they be ministers, scientists or lay people, may find the strength to give clear witness of the need to care for the world that you created. May they speak out courageously on the changes in lifestyle that are now seen to be necessary to protect your creation.

Monday 7th March

The Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a trade deal being negotiated between the US and the European Commission (EC). Its stated aims are to align trade regulations and standards, improve protection for overseas investors and increase

access to services and government procurement markets by foreign investors. Put simply, the aim is to enhance the profits of multinational corporations at the expense of national safety and environmental standards. The House of Bishops, in a pastoral letter, wrote: "Christians should be wary of accumulations of power wherever they take place. They should be as reluctant to live under an overweening corporate sector as under an overweening state."

Despite the secrecy surrounding the negotiations, campaigners against the TTIP have seen enough evidence to describe it as "a catastrophic threat to our democracy, our public services, our environment, and more". Global Justice Now is preparing a TTIP prayer pack for faith groups. See www.globaljustice.org.uk/ttip-threat-democracy-standards-and-jobs

Tuesday 8th March

"The Restorative Economy" is a report from Tearfund aiming to build on the Jubilee 2000 campaign which resulted in the debts of low-income countries falling from 75%

of their income to just over 25%. The report calls for a new movement to:

- Ensure that we live within environmental limits so that our economy works with God's creation rather than against it;
- Ensure that everyone is able to meet their basic needs;
- Keep inequality within reasonable bounds both at national and international level

Wednesday 9th March

The report suggests that change can start with our own lifestyles. In particular:

1. Living within our fair share of the world's resources, especially as regards food, travel and the stuff we buy,
2. Responding to poverty with radical generosity, remembering Jesus's words: 'From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded' (Luke 12.48)
3. Speaking out prophetically e.g. by political activism and shareholder action and boycotting certain products.

faith in progress – does not provide a moral basis for society". (*Ophuls*) He suggests that we need a "non-sacerdotal, non-sectarian, non-theological, non-tribal religious worldview that is compatible with science and provides personal orientation, moral guidance and a framework for public order without imposing dogmas that must be believed or priests who must be obeyed." The conclusion he does not draw is that major religions must set aside differences over dogma if they are to come together with a joint message to humanity as to its response to climate change. This may be beginning to happen.

Tuesday 22nd March

"There are numerous possibilities for obtaining energy from non-fossil fuel sources such as thorium reactors, geothermal wells, solar furnaces etc, but all these solutions will be more costly, more challenging and far less profitable than simply burning up fossil wealth. . . Technology may eventually provide the wherewithal for an advanced civilisation that is very different from ours, but it offers

no quick or easy fixes to our current plight, nor will it allow us to evade the necessity for social and political change." (*Ophuls*)

Wednesday 23rd March

Henry Thoreau, author of "Walden" wrote: "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage point of voluntary poverty. In short, a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone." However, writes Ophuls, civilisation with all its advantages is here to stay. So far we have vainly and foolishly tried to be civilised in opposition to nature – not only to the natural world itself, but to the primitive world within us. Our task is to create a civilisation which transcends our primitive instincts without opposing them "We still live by hunting, but now we do so as heedless vandals instead of honest savages. Still before us therefore is the real work of civilisation."

Friday 18th March

Rousseau in his “Social Contract” contrasts the 'general will' (what is good for the community) with the 'will of all' – which is the sum of all our individual wills. He suggests that people following their private wills almost always create a 'will of all' contrary to the general will. Ophuls gives as an example the use of private cars which leads to a host of public ills, such as traffic-choked and polluted cities that are friendlier to cars than to people, thousands of dead and injured people each year, the threat of climate disruption, the loss of good farmland to urban sprawl, foreign policy dilemmas and even wars etc. “Perfectly reasonable and legitimate private desires aggregate into global outcomes that no reasonable person would want.”

Saturday 19th March

Thomas Jefferson commended the attitude of farmers whose interests, being rooted in the soil, largely coincided with those of the community, whereas merchants “who have no country” are likely to be both venal and ambitious, i.e.

bad citizens who seek profit at the expense of their country. He wrote: “We must make our choice between *economy and liberty* or *profusion and slavery*.” In other words, the goal of economics must be sufficiency rather than affluence, and stewardship rather than consumption, for the current generation has no right “to eat up the usufruct of the land for several generations to come.”

Palm Sunday 20th March.

Loving Father, whose Son rode this day towards that city which closed its heart against him, may we not shut from him any part of the city of life, but acknowledge him as Ruler and hail him as King in everything we do or say or think, so that we, knowing the things that belong to our peace, may be his and he may be ours, for ever and ever. (*Leslie Weatherhead – adapted*)

Monday 21st March

“The phobia of many Westerners against religion in politics ignores the fact that the modern age is just as religious as the preceding ones, but its secular creed – a fervent

4. Using our power as voters and consumers. Politicians listen when a critical mass of people demands change.
5. Using relationships, whether as parents, mentors of young people, friends of older people or in other ways, in order to build the new economy.

Thursday 10th March

The report gives examples of changes needed at society level:

1. A circular economy which uses everything again and again in keeping with God's design principles;
2. Double food production and halve resource intensity, especially in Africa where crop yields are lower than anywhere else;
3. Shift to a zero-carbon economy by closing down coal-fired power stations, ending fossil-fuel subsidies and introducing carbon stress-testing for pension funds;
4. Introduce a global carbon budget shared between countries on a per capita basis, so creating a new source of

- development finance from trade, not aid;
5. Tackle inequality with a fairer taxation of property, such as a land value tax;
6. Rebalance the tax system away from desirable activities such as work, and towards activities we need to discourage, such as carbon emissions pollution and waste.

Friday 11th March

A CAFOD discussion paper called “Common Good and the Economy” says that “our current model of economic growth is based on unsustainable resource production and consumption”. It criticises countries that, “keen to attract investment and to drive growth, have reduced environmental and social standards, which has given global capital a means to avoid controls and in some cases even driven a 'race to the bottom'.” TTIP would only worsen this situation.

Saturday 12th March

TTIP aims to remove 'barriers to trade'. Some of the 'barriers to trade' threatened with removal are:

1. Food standards designed to protect consumers, such as those which ban meat produced with growth hormones
2. Financial regulations designed to avoid another economic meltdown
3. EU bans on 1300 harmful chemicals which are allowed in the US

Sunday 13th March

Loving Father, who gave us commandments that guide us into paths of justice and compassion, teach us what it means to make good trade rules – rules that can bend to serve the needs of the poor, rules that are strong to contain the greed of the rich, rules that will challenge the inequalities present in our world. Make us restless for change, refusing to submit to political pressures where life and death are bought in the market place, and daring to work for the coming of your kingdom, where the world is to be reshaped in the image of Christ, in whose Name we pray. (The Baptist Union of Great Britain).

Monday 14th March

Describing the plight of beauty in a totally commercialised culture, James Buchan writes: “The sensation of beauty cannot survive in the age of money; for any beauty must be exploited, reproduced a million times by every medium open to commercial ingenuity, till one can only cover one’s eyes and stop one’s ears.” According to Ophuls, “The quintessential task of the new paideia (education) will be to restore beauty to its rightful place in the pantheon of human values”. Referring to modern art, he asks: “Does it inspire us with higher ideals or nobler visions of life? Does it connect us to our archetypal depths or to the wonders of creation? Or does it simply reflect back to us an increasingly disjointed, frenetic and artificial way of life? Just as a plethora of man-made laws can never compensate for a lack of moral law, so ‘art’ that is not essentially beautiful is a symptom of corruption, not health.”

Tuesday 15th March

Ophuls contrasts Balinese agriculture where, for centuries, rice

growing was regulated in a way that produced reliable crops while preserving soil fertility, with much of the arid Sahel region of Africa, where ‘experts’ drilled artesian wells for local herders. This led to the expansion of flocks and herds with catastrophic results – ruinous overgrazing, the breakdown of the traditional system for allocating water and pasturage and, in the end, a disastrous famine. “Ecological limits may not be barriers to overcome, but boundaries to be respected.”

Wednesday 16th March

We live in an age of affluence fuelled by the exploitation of stored solar energy in the form of fossil fuels. We enjoy levels of comfort and plenty unimaginable to our ancestors. “But the impending return of ecological scarcity means that the expectations and aspirations of billions of individuals cannot be met, and that individual wants will increasingly be subordinated to collective needs. Governments now confront the Herculean task of effecting an economic, social and political

transition from the industrial age to the age of ecology. The question is whether this can be achieved without relapsing into totalitarian tyranny or religious despotism.”

Thursday 17th March

A ‘Small is Beautiful’ prescription for society may be thought of as utopian, but (according to Ophuls) “The manifold pressures of ecological scarcity will soon compel us to live in smaller, simpler communities that are closer to the land than the megacities of industrial civilisation. Well before we have completely exhausted the capital stocks of fossil fuels and mineral ores on which the industrial order depends, materials and energy will become increasingly scarce and expensive. Technology, if deployed in a skilful and timely way, can moderate this inexorable trend, but it cannot forestall it. Our future will of necessity be more frugal, local, agricultural, diversified and decentralised than at present. Our task must be to make a virtue of this necessity.”