

# CHRISTIANS AGAINST ALL ANIMAL ABUSE

Winter 2006

## Animal Padre's Christians Against All Animal Abuse Newsletter Christmas 2006 Issue

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A Happy & Cruelty Free Christmas Followed By a Coming Year To Be The Best In Your Life!  
*This Is Our Prayer For Every Reader; And There's no Reason Why It Shouldn't Be So!*

In The Words Of William Carey: 'attempt great things for God & expect great things from God'



Looking in to God's House



& then warmly welcomed in!

What a privilege it was to share a service of animal blessing in the parish church of Meliden, Denbighshire, in late October. Indeed, on the kind invitation of the diocesan chancellor, Canon Reece, one was also invited to give the short sermon. Well – as most of you may already know, I never write out a sermon but rely upon the Good Shepherd Himself to give me the appropriate words to impart, and this occasion proved no exception as several folk asked me for copies of what I'd preached. Consequently, I later went in to a quiet room and began to write down the sermon as I recalled it. Therefore, it may not be verbatim but at least the gist of my sermonette – during which the animals were as good as gold! - was as follows:

*It is a privilege and honour to be with you all this afternoon. The Good Shepherd Himself is with us as one can feel His presence very much in our midst and so I want to take your minds back to the wild west days of America and to a young lad there who was little more than a toddler. He lived in quite a shack of a home and one day, scuttling across the floor of the log cabin was a beetle which had now somehow got on to its back and appeared unable to rectify itself by getting on to its feet. The little boy spied the situation and when he got to it, much to the amazement of ma and pa, rather than stamp upon it, he turned it on to its feet and then watched as the beetle scuttled away to disappear in a crack between the wall and the floor. Well, the proud parents never forgot the incident!*

*The years past and family fortune began to build up, resulting in the little fellows family moving to a farm a good many miles away. The furniture and all other relevant paraphernalia were put into the covered wagons and the wagon train started for the*

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*new destination. Well, all went well until they came to a swift running ford on the journey. Indeed, it proved difficult indeed to get the horse drawn wagons across to the other side. What a relief it was when they got there. But then – horror of horrors – the yapping of a little dog was heard at the other side. It was the pet of a servant girl recently acquired. ‘Can’t be helped’ said the boy’s mum and dad. It’ll just have to be left to fend for itself’ And hardly had those words been uttered than had their young lad – now quite tall and lanky – entered the waters and was struggling to get to the other side. Thankfully, he made it and soon had the grateful dog beneath an arm. And, more remarkable still, with much difficulty because of the current, he was back with the family; and not before he’d returned the little moggy to its grateful young mistress. Well, ma and pa looked to each other with a gulp in their throats as if to say ‘this is our boy!’*

*Again, time passed – the years came and went – and their young lad eventually began to study for the law. Indeed, he hadn’t been off to college for long until one day, possibly off to some assizes - and in the company of a group of other students - they were passing a tree when one of his mates said ‘look at that fledging: it must have fallen out of the nest. Ah well, it’ll make a nice taste on the pallet of some roaming predator’. But then, to their embarrassment – and regardless of the young fellows Sunday best clothes, this young man was now struggling up a difficult tree where he then replaced the young fledging back in to the nest. Indeed, his act of compassion no doubt made his fellow students somewhat ashamed as not having initiated the same moral path. One thing was sure: they didn’t forget the event.*

*And then there came the day when the young thin lanky fellow became a man – nay a gentleman! – of twenty eight or nine; and – once again he was in the company of comrades. They were now, possibly – along with him - qualified lawyers. Indeed they were – if my memory serves me right – on the way to an assizes, when the loud grunting of a boar was heard. And soon they witnessed its predicament. It had swivelled on its back in a shallow, slimy bog, and couldn’t right itself. Well, hardly had one young lawyer opened his mouth in horror than had their friend walked in to the mud, arrayed in clothes appropriate for the judiciary, and with great difficulty got the petrified pig on to its feet and out of the bog hole.*

*Well, my dear friends, the young fellow I’ve been referring to was Abraham Lincoln, and he went on to later lead a civil war, the purpose of which was largely to liberate the slaves. He was a fellow whose love and compassion was all embracing and the following words – though sometimes attributed to the earlier William Pitt – are also, most certainly, later attributed to him: -*

*‘I expect to pass this way but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it; for I shall not pass this way again’.*

## **Two New Organisations Well Worth Viewing**

The first organisation is **Oxford Centre For Animal Ethics**, the website being: <http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/index.php?p=welcome>

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The new venture, somewhat reflects the astounding academic work initiated over the years by Reverend Andrew Linzey; for here is a fellow I first heard of, way back in the 1970s through the help of a delightful lady called Kathryn Reynolds: a militant animal activist with a father who was vice principal of an Oxford college. Sadly, it was several decades later before I was to meet the aspiring young academic that Kathryn so much admired, and it was the occasion of lovely Vicki Moore's memorial service in Liverpool's vast Anglican cathedral. Andrew Linzey conducted a most moving service and it was after this that we spoke to each other before my M.E. flared up and one had to sadly make the journey homewards. Yes, a brief encounter indeed, but during it Andrew had quite remarkably picked me out and said to an enquirer: 'If you want to know anything about the animal cause this is the fellow to see'; and then he graciously pointed to myself. Yes, the spirit of true Christian humility expressed by one whose academic efforts for the animal cause undoubtedly dwarf my own.

Well, the years pass by quite uncannily; swifter than we want them to. I do what I can in my own small way – as do most of us! – but, meanwhile, behind the scenes there are folk such as Andrew who surfaces to reveal a great achievement: a foundation expressed through a website which graces our animal cause with vast academic support. Yes, and at a time when, quite regrettably, well intentioned activists worn down by frustration have unintentionally, possibly, done more harm for the cause of animal rights than they have done good. But then, it's easy for me to be judgmental here, for though I cringe at the tactless and uncouth methods used by some of them, I have not been imprisoned or brought before a court for our Cause as they have! I sense I have 'rocked the boat' many times but only the ecclesiastical one, and not without cost.

The latter certainly revealed its self when a well-intentioned lady established a foundation called 'Christians Opposed To Vivisection'. And, through the use of my name as its first patron, she became no less influential than to acquire four more patrons: three bishops and one archbishop! But sadly for the new organisation she insisted that I compile and send out in my own words why vivisection could not be equated with Christian ethics. Well, this I most certainly did, using the analogy of the Jewish holocaust and the Nazi's medical experimentation blocks. Well, all went well until a reporter of The Scotsman pitted me against the equivalence of the Jewish Sanhedrin for Britain. Influential Jews were then 'up in arms' that I should dare to compare the horrific treatment their fathers had endured in such death camps as in any way reflective of animal experimentation by respected vivisectionists. Consequently, each bishop, who was a fellow patron along with myself, was approached over the phone and, *one by one*, they disassociated themselves from me and three withdrew their patronage; the archbishop of Wales alone retaining his.

Indeed, it reminded me of how Our Lord must have felt when, one by one, His disciples forsook Him after distorted accusations against Him were brought forward. Yes, the good book says: *'put not your trust in princes'* and I've been around long enough to know that it's equally applicable to princes of the church! At such times it's a real comfort to acquire comfort from many a hymn. Indeed, at the moment I think of the following: *'Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee Not! The Master praises – what is man?'*

The second new website I learn of is **'Voice For Ethical Research At Oxford'**. *Its' address is VERO, PO Box 692, Oxford OX1 9DR.* and it concerns Oxford students of the past as well as the present; and I dare say I'm eligible to join them! However, though remarkable ladies such as Ann Widdecombe are amongst their group, the support of a Peter Thatchell – unknown to me as an ex Oxford student! – does not enamour me *personally* to their *law abiding* cause. But, perhaps again, I am too judgmental here and stand open to be corrected? Indeed, we who stick our necks above the parapet risk having them knocked, but the alternative is to succumb to this present government's political correctness; the ultimate aim of which appears to me to be one of increasingly eroding freedom of expression so that –

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regardless of all the money spent on education – we become as puppets within a dictatorial state that will ultimately evolve in to a European ‘super’ state of incredible horror. And, of course, I am not alone here. My good friend Dr Vernon Coleman – whose books should be in every home – thinks similarly. So does a Philip Day; and so does The British Freedom party. We’re not ALL ‘nutters’ and countless other citizens need to awaken to the grave plight of Britain before it is too late.

## **A Dedicated Cleric With A Vision From Down Under!**

How refreshing it was to receive an email from an Australian cleric commending me on my website – one hosted by the magnanimous Hoffman Foundation. Yes, and perhaps more encouraging still as it came from a Presbyterian; for it was through the saintliness of a Presbyterian minister that I spiritually passed from darkness in to light. Indeed, at merely 17 and a half years of age, on my way to a Sunday cinema show, a strange compulsion to enter a church overtook me. Consequently, on passing over in to the open door of the same a delightful minister attired in Geneva gown, bands and hood, grasped my hand and with eyes of a spiritual glow uttered the words: ‘Welcome home!’

I went in to that church, dejected and utterly downcast, but as I came out the volume of my ears appeared to have been turned up: the birds were chirping; the stars were sparkling; there was a new spring in the stride of my feet; and Jesus was closer to me than words could express. He was real! He had found me and has been with me ever since. Well, much more could be said. The first twenty-four years is in my latest book *YOUNG SPIRITUAL TRAMP*. The rest is yet to be told either down here on earth or up there in Heaven. I tell you: *Jesus is real*, and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise!

But getting back to my new Presbyterian acquaintance and friend, what follows is the recent sermon he delivered at the first animal blessing service he has ever taken. It’s a blessing to my soul; and I believe it will be to yours as well. So here it is:

***‘Knowing The Way Home’, by the Reverend Anthony Lang of New South Wales***



*A few days ago, when I was telling someone about this morning’s special pet blessing service, he looked at me strangely and asked, “Um, you are not going a little odd, are you, Tony?” I told him I didn’t think so... well, no odder than usual anyway! I am sure that my friend’s response is the response of many people, at least here in Australia, where pet blessing services are virtually unheard of. They are not so uncommon in Europe, where they are held, usually on the nearest Sunday to the fourth of October, which is St Francis of Assisi Day. We may well ask, then, apart from the lovely example of St Francis, what justification do we have for holding a pet blessing service? Should pets be blessed? For an authoritative*

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*answer, all we have to do is turn to Scripture, and to the ancient Book of Genesis, the first Book in the Bible. There, in chapter one, from verse 20 on, we read that God blessed the creatures He had made, and saw that what He had done was good. Note this: He did not merely create them – He blessed them. Later, in verse twenty-eight, the sixth day, He created mankind, male and female, and blessed them, using almost exactly the same words that were used to bless the other living creatures. The only difference is that mankind was given dominion over all other living creatures... not to do with as we will, but rather as stewards of what has been entrusted to us. The blessing of God extends beyond man to the whole of God's living creatures. In holding a blessing service for our pets, we acknowledge, first, that God created and blessed them, second, that God is pleased when we care for what He has made, which He loves, and third, that God has given us a special responsibility of care. For all those reasons it is appropriate to bless what God saw to be good, and blessed*

*All of us who love our pets probably have a wealth of stories to tell, of our pets' love, intelligence, faithfulness. There is a delightful book called "Chicken Soup for the Cat & Dog Lover's Soul" in which there are dozens of accounts, in nine memorable chapters, of animal tales: animals as helpers, friends, healers and teachers. I recall someone telling me recently of a couple who had an elderly dog that sleeps on a mat beside their bed. As the dog grew older, it started to snore. On one particular evening, the husband was out at a reunion. His wife found it hard to sleep that night, for the dog's snoring was particularly heavy. Finally, in desperation, she got out of bed, rummaged through a drawer and found a big blue ribbon, and tied the sleeping dog's jaw shut - and wonder of wonders – the snoring ceased! Considerably later, her husband rolled in, much the worse for wear, fell on the bed on his back and commenced snoring heavily, mouth hanging open. His wife could stand it no longer. She went to the drawer, found another ribbon, which happened to be red, and tied her husband's jaw shut. Again, the result was amazing – the snoring stopped! In the morning, the husband got up and saw himself in the mirror with the big red ribbon still attached. He took it off and glanced at the still sleeping dog, still wearing the big blue ribbon. He shook his head and said, "I don't know what you and I got up to last night, dog – but we sure did OK. You got first prize and I got second!"*

*When it comes to unconditional love and faithfulness, bringing us comfort in times of sorrow, pleasure and peace of mind in our daily lives, our pets frequently take out first prize. They get the blue ribbon. It is now a well-known fact that pet owners usually have lower blood pressure than non-pet owners, and their value is well known and well documented in nursing homes, where they are considered wonderful assets, bringing joy and pleasure to the patients. Yes, the Lord certainly knew what He was doing when He gave us pets! Let us not forget, however, that our pets can know fear and pain and sorrow. They grieve, they fret. Knowing our pets, seeing their needs and understanding their language when they "speak" to us, can increase our sensitivity, our compassion. At one time, it was believed that animals had no real intelligence, that their responses were simply instinctive. The lie has been given to that theory time and time again. We know how truly intelligent are guide dogs, but it is a fact that intelligence, and an ability to think, are documented in all sorts of creatures.*



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*Be amazed at the astonishing homing abilities of all sorts of creatures'... birds that criss-cross the planet, fish that find their way to homes they have never seen. Science often has no explanation but hazards guesses that may or may not be correct. When we get to know the wild creatures, we discover that they have personalities. There was a young magpie in a former parish that often visited our garden. I fed him occasionally with some bread or meat, which I threw to him. He made it plain that when I threw it, he wanted to catch it in mid-air. He became so excited, running almost to my feet. He was actually playing with me, as in a game. It would be an appalling world, if God had not blessed us with these wonderful friends who share our world. God has blessed us. He blessed them, and it is fitting that we bless them too.*

*There is a chapter in the book, "Chicken Soup for the Cat & Dog Lover's Soul" called "Saying Goodbye" which contains some of the sad stories. We all dread that time when the pets we've loved, and who love us, die. It's a heart-rendingly painful time. Many's the time I've heard people ask, and I have wondered myself, "What happens to them? Do they go to heaven? Will I ever see again this one that I loved so dearly?" Here, of course, we are sailing into completely uncharted waters. No one knows what heaven is really like. There are only brief glimpses of it in the Bible, and none of them mentions animals. The official position of the mainstream church seems to be a belief that animals don't have souls and therefore don't go to heaven. I can't agree. In Genesis chapter one, verse thirty, there is a reference to every creature having "the breath of life" (RSV). The Hebrew word used for "breath of life" is "Nephesh" – which can also mean "soul." The Jewish people believe animals have a soul. What we call heaven they call "The New Eden"; a blessed time to come when God will redeem the whole earth. They point to the wonderful vision of the prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the redemption of the world, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy Mountain", the prophecy, continues, "and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6-9). When we turn to the New Testament, the evidence is more elusive, but there are tantalizing glimpses. On three separate occasions, we find in the New Testament mention of the word "paradise." Jesus told the thief beside Him on the cross, "Today, you shall be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:43). Paul uses the same word in 2 Cor 12:4, and John in the Book of Revelation 2:7. The literal translation of the word "paradise" is a "walled garden." Can you imagine a garden without trees, flowers, birds and animals? I certainly can't. Here again, we just may be given a tiny glimpse into what heaven may be like.*

*I grew up on a farm. When I was very young, during the war, when there was very little petrol to be had, I would watch my father ploughing, behind by two magnificent Clydesdale horses, Annie and Tom. They were beautiful creatures and they loved each other. We also had another horse called Fizzer, who used to pull our sulky. One day my mother took my young brother and me in the sulky, visiting a neighbouring family on another farm. It was dark when we left for home, and my mother soon became hopelessly lost. It was pitch black, not a farmhouse light in sight, dead flat country, side roads snaking off here and there into the darkness, no way of knowing where we were. Finally my mother gave Fizzer his head, which*

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*means she simply let the reins go. Fizzer, who by that time was thoroughly disgusted with all the to-ing and fro-ing, set off at a fast trot, and took us straight home without one wrong turn!*

*When I recall that experience, I often recall the words of our text: Cattle know who owns them, and donkeys know where their master feeds them, but that is more than my people Israel know. They don't understand at all." Isaiah was speaking to Israel early in the 8th century BC, at a time when things were bad, and faith was at low ebb. Many had no faith. Today, as then, there are many who have no faith. They don't understand. They don't know the way home. There are many ways by which faith may come to us, such as through God's Word, and the action of the Holy Spirit. Another way is to open our eyes, and see, in this wonderful world, and in the awesome harmony of the universe, the hand of the One Who created and blessed His creatures, Who calls us to share eternity in heaven with Him. Although the way is not always clear, and sometimes may even be dark, as it was that night for old Fizzer, may we take the road that leads to our eternal home.*

## **‘At The Cross, At The Cross Where I First Saw The Light’!**

Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> of December found a group of us holding a vigil within the ancient city of Chester. We assembled at The Cross: a spot from which past reformers such as Matthew Henry had expounded the Gospel. And, though the previous days had been ‘pea-soupers’, the sun came out for us and, following prayer, a brief message by ones self, and Judi leading us in two carols, we then made our way in a dignified single procession - down the pedestrianized precincts - before standing outside the cathedral.



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I've no doubt that many consciences were pricked, and not least a rather drab group of hot gospellers whose only theme seemed to be: 'unless you get born again like us then you are eternally lost' Well, we stood at their side for a while until we raised our banners up from the ground. What they read obviously disturbed them and one said he'd rather that we moved a little away – which of course we did; and then I let them know that I could preach louder than they. Well, quite hilarious if not so downright sad! If one's concept of salvation only embraces the self styled elect and saved who frequently ranter in several city side streets, then give me the company of their 'presumed' damned every day!

As for the poster I held displaying a sweat shed for breeding turkeys intensively, my mind goes back to one's first parish. Indeed, it was one of late 1960s affluence. Yes, and following a possible visit to a young couple following a christening, the young farmer was most anxious to show me how he'd ventured out in to an intensive form of breeding. 'The thing for the future', he assured me and – on reaching a large shed - as he began to slide open the doors it might have appeared as if he was about to show me his latest 'baby' of a Mercedes or a Bentley! But instead, to my horror there was a loud and eerie humming in my ears; a warm stench; and long necks looming out of darkness. These were Turkeys crammed together and looking as if from a Frankenstein or Alexander Poe's horror film. Indeed, I was utterly aghast, yet tried to cover it. *'Might not this new innovation be a trifle cruel?'* I hesitated to suggest. *'Not at all; it's the farming of the future; and I'm in on it!'* was the gist of his hearty reply.

Well, I went home to the rectory deeply disturbed by what I'd seen. What was the matter with me? He wasn't disturbed at this new innovation, which would certainly increase his profits astronomically. Perhaps I was over sensitive. However, armed with a leaflet or two of relevant literature and also aware of my responsibility for 'the cure of souls' I returned a week or so later. But this time the young farmer was out; and I had time to speak in depth with his young and hospitable wife who over nine months previous had been married in to affluence.

I can only remember that I won her heart over how defenceless birds and animals needed to be justly and lovingly cared for; and she could see no reason why they should not revert to the previous free range lifestyle. Well, we left most amicably and not without a prayer by myself offered for her, her husband, their young baby; and all the livestock within their care.

Consequently – quite unexpectedly – several days later, who drove up to the rectory in his red Jaguar car (registered VET 1) than did the local veterinary surgeon? With much difficulty, but aided by two sticks because of his crippling M.S., the fellow demanded to see me. One can only say that he was utterly livid: *"Someone needs to take it on himself to address you, and I have taken it upon myself to do so as you are upsetting quite a number of my top clientele. Indeed, you have almost created a rift between a young man and wife over alleged animal cruelty on their farm!....."* Well, a most heated debate followed in which I gave as good as I got. The simple gist of the matter was that intensive factory farming methods were one hundred percent humane as far as the vet was concerned; and as for my previous criticism from the pulpit of vivisection – there was absolutely no cruelty whatsoever in the same.



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Well, my final words to him - during the period that happened to be Advent - was that God's love had conquered my heart and, like John the Baptist, I would preach the truth and rely on Him. His parting words from the rectory were stark and almost threatening: 'be very careful that someone does not knock off your head, like they did John the Baptist's!'

Yes, diplomacy has never been my top asset! A Church In Wales rector once said to me: 'always avoid a direct confrontation!'. Well, I think I've lived in Yorkshire long enough to call a spade a spade – if not sometimes a shovel! Yet in unintentionally offending anyone else, it always hurts me far more than it does them. However, I dare not remain silent when dumb creatures are being horrifically exploited. I'd rather be a John The Baptist than an ecclesiastical jellyfish (void of backbone). Jesus Himself was far from tactful. That's why the church leaders so despised Him; handed Him over to be flogged; yes, and horribly crucified!

Friend, may the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph & Mary, & the peace of the Christ Child, be God's wondrous gift to You!