

Christians Against All Animal Abuse

Autumn 2005

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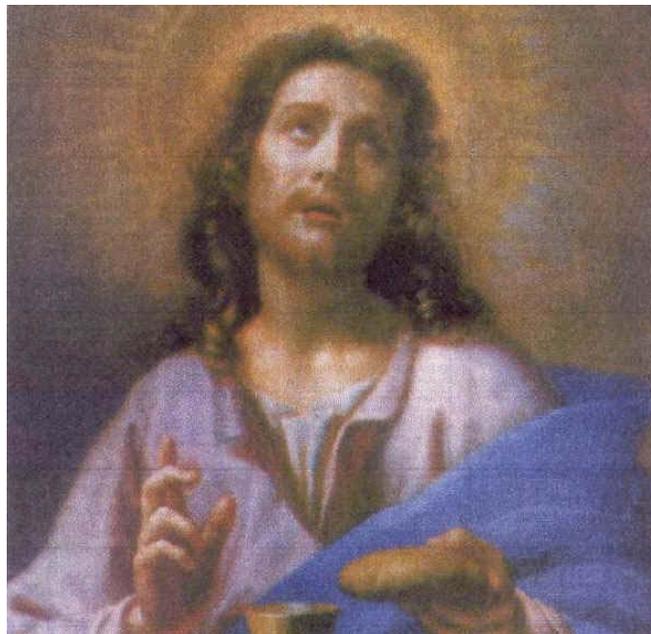
We Now Have Our Own Website

With grateful thanks to the dedication and generosity of a like-minded American couple, whose Christian priorities mostly appear to very much mirror our own, you can now view us by logging in to : www.animalpadre.org If you have access to the internet, then please use it to the full; and feel free to run off copies of this, and our previous newsletters - plus any other literature – upon your printer. For this will greatly help to circulate the message further still, with no more added expense to our tight budget.

Christendom's Compassionate & Cruel Contrasts

I've longed at times to establish one's own church which would do full justice to the animals. Vacant chapel buildings have been considered, yet without financial help the odds have appeared to be against me. But then, words of encouragement have recently come one's way via the internet. A most moving picture of Christ appeared – to my mind, far greater than Leonardo's of the Last Supper - and accompanied by a paragraph that speaks volumes::

"The Church of Christ is never a place, but always a people; never a fold, but always a flock; never a sacred building, but always where believers gather in His name. The Church is you who pray, not where you pray. A structure of brick and marble can no more be a Church than your clothes of serge and satin can be you. There is nothing more sacred than you ~ for your soul is the sanctuary of God."



How true these above words are! They are those of the present free-lance Bishop Of Glastonbury: Sean Manchester, OSG. I sense that, like myself, he is a radical cleric in that his approach to Christianity is much more akin to the early British Celtic Church than to that Continental usurper - corrupted by worldly ambitions - which sought to take over a rule akin to past Caesars rather than emulate the role of the lowly Galilean

I refer to that Medieval branch of Christendom which - very sadly, had more blood on its hands than all the later branches put together! Indeed, it persecuted with the sword – and later an inquisition – all who stood in its way. Yes, and not only did this begin in Britain, following Augustine's demands that the ancient British church submit to its tyranny; it also manifested its ecclesiastical totalitarianism throughout Europe. Indeed, the Albigenses were sought out like hunted animals. Neither men, women nor children were spared the wrath of this retrograde system once - amongst other things - their vegetarianism came in conflict with 'holy' churches 'just' decrees!

Such persecuted groups of believers – all of whom were seeking to get back to New Testament forms of the original Christianity - were stigmatised as sects long before Luther ever came on the scene. There were – to name but a few – the Hussites; Albigensies, Waldenses, the Bogomils (Friends Of God) and - not least for Britain! - the Wycliffites. Indeed, in their varied attempts to get back to the original simplified forms of the Christian faith many became vegetarian. Indeed, to such an extent that 'to prove the sincerity of a recant in preference to slow death by inquisitorial torture, their persecutors had them, individually, strangling a chicken and then eating of the same'. Yet, so strong were some to avow their vegetarianism as consistent with Christian ideals that they often chose the horrors of slow torture and death rather than have another living creature killed for their food.

Well – thank God! - there is no penalty whatever to become a Vegetarian in today's world. Yet, it is surprising how many persist in making their bodies the graveyards for stressed up, murdered, beasts. And up to recently, the medical profession throughout the 'civilised' world commended flesh eating as essential for health!. Even today, throughout doctors' surgeries, health centres and hospitals, one will be fortunate indeed to find a single poster or leaflet commending vegetarianism. It is to the rival and humane alternative therapies that one must turn for the commendation of truly humane and health imparting lifestyles..

Am I Too Critical; Or 'Do I Smell A Rat'?

My apologies to this much-maligned carnivore! Perhaps I should rather ask: 'Can a leopard change its spots?' I sense that the world which dishes out prescriptions, via the average GP peddler, is as little concerned in priorities of alleviating human suffering as it is of animal suffering! Their prime driving force could well be – to quote St Peter -, one of 'filthy lucre'; and far too many politicians are influenced, I sense, by the same bait.

It is curious, indeed, that Britain's tax funded National Health Service is in such close liaison with this Nation's Number One Health Hazard: the legalised drug and chemical 'Mafia'! And further a field – yet looming over us from the Continent - need one wonder that, throughout Europe the humanely produced herbal, homeopathic and mineral supplement outlets are being so subtly suppressed by repetitive recommendations from regimes who advocate yet further animal tested products. Yes, products that they realise create yet further side effects for humans; and, as a consequence, require yet further drug induced medications!

And, once again, the present government at this month's annual conference has affirmed the probability of tackling Global warming by establishing more nuclear reactors throughout the UK. Well, I sense this is as lacking in foresight as to dump fluoride in to our reservoirs so as to protect youngsters' teeth, while it builds up carcinogenic residues within all our bodies! Mind you, what is our alternative within the UK to a Tony Blair's regime? Is it to be a Tory one with a recently retired vice chairman of a vast tobacco consortium at its head? I refer to the 65 year old Pro-European Ken Clarke. If members of his party put him forward as a suitable candidate to become future leader, then what does it say about them? And if the whole party choose him as leader, then what does it say about our main opposition party to the present government? Obviously, not much!

Excommunication? Well Not Quite The Same!

Well, excommunication is hardly the term as I never embraced their brand of the faith; but it is with much sadness I discovered – and have since had confirmed – that my name has been removed from the list of patrons of what has recently become: Catholic Animal Concern. Indeed, under its previous title: Catholic Study Circle For Animal Welfare, both Doreen and myself enjoyed most wonderful times of fellowship. At a time when one felt that ours was a lone battle – and quite remarkably – after having denounced the Catholic practice of allowing church towers to be used for throwing out live goats in Spain! – I was warmly invited not only to partake, but later to be guest speaker on their week long spiritual retreats. In fact they were the best retreats of any I have been on. They involved trips out to visit animal related centres, terrific fellowship, and the opportunity to celebrate a daily Eucharist for Non Romans, as well as evening devotions for all.

Such a fellowship included all shades of churchmanship and attracted animal lovers from a broad spectrum. Yes, from Baptists to High Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians to die cast traditional Romans. Indeed, our love for animals brought us all close together. And in those days not only did we have a chairman (with a devoted Wife) who fiercely slated cardinals such as Rattzinger (now Pope Benedict); but this remarkable Study Circle also had a Presbyterian in charge of all holiday arrangements. Yes, one who'd actually prepared youngsters – when she was a non-catholic teacher – at a Catholic school. Here she was huddled against me, with some other senior stalwarts, back in 1995.



Sacred shrines were visited as far away as Assisi, and as close as Walsingham; plus St Winefride's here on our very door step! Indeed, animal sanctuaries were also a focal point of interest as were our annual church services of animal blessing. The earliest occurred in the prestigious St James's Church of Piccadilly where I shared the officiation and blessing of the animals with the retired Dean of Westminster abbey. Then in following years – at my suggestion - we moved for our venue to that most prestigious Cathedral Of The Good Shepherd in Stamford Hill. Yes, a church of the Ancient Catholic denomination which, amongst its beautiful trappings, had a delightful side chapel dedicated to the animal kingdom. For, sadly, no Roman church at that period seemed willing to loan its premises for the blessing of our four legged friends; and as for the renowned Anglican church of St Martin In The Fields which overlooked Trafalgar Square, they were eager to invite us. But their charge for the day was astronomical!

Thankfully - and not before time - other cathedrals and prominent churches are now happy to be host to annual services for animal welfare. But what good are they when pets are excluded from entrance, and their fees are so 'over the top'? Nevertheless, some things *are* beginning to change. But - as I personally view it - not all change is for the best. For example, with the older past stalwarts of the former 'Catholic Study Circle For Animal Welfare' either retiring gracefully, or 'dying on their feet!', the secretary ship of this renamed 'Catholic Concern For Animals' has past to a most zealous young lady with plenty of fire in her bones. Debra Jones. As a true convert from the Protestant world, is naturally anxious to promote further Roman involvement – who can blame her! -; and both Doreen and myself wish her all the luck in the world. But as one consequence, my patronage is now annulled..

Indeed, the last holiday, cum – retreat, that we had the privilege to partake in was at delightful Rhos-On-Sea. I'd recommended the venue, which, though it was one of many Christian Endeavour homes, bore a truly Catholic name: St Winefred's. Yes, it appeared to be a most appropriate compromise! A sympathetic Catholic priest was invited to offer the daily Mass, while I led the daily Bible devotions relevant to the animal creation. Indeed, the fellowship was superb; and whereas I do not think the other guests and staff - being 'born again' Protestants - appreciated us returning from a local tavern, rather well refreshed, after 11.pm when (believe it or not!) all lights in the rooms were expected to be out by that time, what happened the next evening proved more hilarious still.

Our devout colleagues, who were mostly Catholic, were as loyal to their church as to the animal cause. Indeed, they were convinced that they alone were of the one true church; and more than once one had gently suggested that as she was a convert, I might care to consider the same! Indeed, this was a far cry from five years previous when it had been suggested that the name Catholic be dropped from their Study Circle and that Christian be put in its place. (Something that I, out of respect to the founder, had disapproved of). However, five years on and here I was, encircled by devout and caring Romans possibly feeling sorry for the likes of myself who hadn't evolved towards embracing the one true church outside of which there was possibly no salvation.

However, that night a group of Protestant evangelicals came to our venue to conduct an open meeting who were as eager for getting converts as were any holy Romans. "It's not confirmation but conversion!" was the gist of their spouting "It's not accepting a dead creed but accepting a living Christ!". And then, of course, the full force of an appeal followed at the end: "There is no salvation to any except in accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord: you *must* be born again! Who will accept Him tonight?" Well, appreciating both sides one was able to laugh at both dogmatic stands and think of a past ditty:

*They drew round them a circle, that kept me out,
I was a heretic, a schismatic! A thing to flout!*

*Ah, but Christ's love and I, had the grace to win
For, we drew our circle, which included them in!*

And, let's be quite frank, it's no doubt due to my scepticism of this new Pope Benedict – plus many references in my latest book (Young Spiritual Tramp) to a post war brand of Catholicism I encountered - that retaining me as a patron of Catholic Concern For Animals has been considered inappropriate. Consequently, my name has been gently dropped; and for this I bear no bitterness towards those responsible. Rather, I wish them all the luck in the world!

The above is just the latest kind of price I've become accustomed to paying over the years, for either my own outspokenness or for possibly being an embarrassment to any cause that may not have been as void of diplomacy as myself. But then, in contrast to priests who went through daily motions of ritual and sacrifice; who amongst the prophets was ever diplomatic?



'Catholic Concern For Animals' at Rhos On Sea, summer 2000

The Approval Of This Wonderful God Is All That Counts

Some speak of progress by stealth, but I don't believe it ever works. When presented with my first parish a well-wisher said: "You've done extremely well for a first parish James. Play your cards right with the bishop and you'll end up one day in his palace!" A senior cleric had earlier said: "keep in with the right folk here in 'Firbeck & Letwell' and you'll be able to 'sit back & purr well'! Well, I went out to view that valley of the Sheffield stockbrokers belt and 'old Nick' whispered in my ear: "all this is yours if you will but fall down and worship me!" .But I replied to this tallyho community - who sought to eagerly lavish me with cheese, wine and braces of pheasant: 'Be gone Satan: Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God; and Him only shalt thou obey' I was very immature and vulnerable in those days. But I'm grateful to God that, at least, I responded as I did, even though many would have called me a blithering fool.

With the hindsight of the years, and the wisdom it brings, I know that if I'd succumbed then preferment would have followed. Over the years I'd have been programmed to conform further; and each time I did the mould would have hardened more, and one would have ended up as the leopard that cannot change its spots. But thankfully – regardless of very many faults – I have sought to live one day at a time realizing that in an hour we know not of the Son of man either returns for us or we may well be ushered in to His presence via premature decease. Consequently, to see evil today, and put off opposing it until a 'possibly' more influential tomorrow is, to my mind, a most despicable form of procrastination. As Christians we are called to make our footprints in the here and now!

It only seems as yesterday that Dr Rutt, then the Bishop of Leicester, persistently asked me to consider taking on the chairmanship of ASWA; while a most dear Valerie Elliott was eager to second me. After regrettable procrastination I agreed; but by then my coming divorce loomed up; and it was then made clear that – though the innocent party – I was not wanted..But then – a decade later – it was requested that I become an official adviser to them (I was then in the far north of Scotland and could hardly attend regular meetings in London!). Well, they most certainly meant well, and one appreciated their thoughtfulness.

It was also about this time that, CIWF eagerly approached me, for they wished to do a full page article about my efforts for the Cause. But then, by pure coincidence - a fortnight later - I was given top media coverage alongside of Robin Webb who'd given a brilliant oration at a rally against live exports. Well, he happened to be the official press representative for ALF. So you can guess the outcome: I never heard from CIWF again!

Opportunities Offered Do Not Always Return

There's a delightful parish church in a small village near Holywell; and just a few yards before it along the same lane of this house of God there is an intensive rearing unit: a veritable animal Treblinka.. I was delighted to be able to officiate at the Sunday morning service; yet I had to be true to God. Consequently, my sermon was centered around our need to protect the animal kingdom; that, but for the grace of God, we could have been born one. Indeed, after the service several folk thanked me for a side of Christianity they had never heard before. Another remarked that he'd never known animals to be prayed for in church before. These cultured country folk appeared most grateful, and especially the children. But for their presence at a family service and I might have publicly slated the animal breeding unit nearby! In a way, I sometimes wish I had done, for I have never been invited back and the opportunity may never return.

You know, these most courteous villagers actually had more innocent blood on their hands – though they certainly didn't know it – than the past villagers in Dachau during the tyranny of the Third Reich. The fact is, that for the latter to have spoken up against the concentration camp would have resulted in their death. While these were living in a free society, yet saying and doing nothing for the animals sorely exploited in rearing sheds almost adjacent to their village church.

Getting Accepted By Man Can Be One's Undoing

My most hurtful memory through 'speaking out' for the animals was in the inauguration of what was termed 'Christians Opposed To Vivisection'. Through my influence and the diplomacy of its founder, several bishops, plus an archbishop, became fellow patrons

alongside myself. In fact the most academic, I was told, volunteered! But then something happened. "We need a press statement as to what we stand for", said the gracious lady who had founded it. "Well! Ask one of the bishops!" I replied. "No" she said quite emphatically. "Definitely not; for you are the one who should make such a statement to the national press. As for them, they hardly know enough about the subject!" Well, she meant well; and you can imagine the outcome!

To elaborate on the evils of vivisection I used the analogy of Nazi medical experimental blocks - even adding that in using humans as models for medical experimentation to advance human medicine, that those Nazi scientists had been more scientifically accurate. Well, most newspapers who published it saw the logic of one's reasoning. But as for 'The Scotsman' - a trash paper based in Edinburgh, - one of its 'smart-alec' reporters contacted the equivalent of a British Sanhedrin, and they didn't but fail to give the impression that I'd trivialised the Holocaust. Consequently, the (then) Archbishop of Wales - who'd previously sung my praises, wished to dissociate himself from my statement. Two more immediately handed in their patronage; while a previous bishop of Salisbury was unhappy about emphasis being placed on the word vivisection - a word he would rather not use! - and considered any comparison between such a word and the holocaust as utterly insensitive and inexcusable.

Consequently, 'Christians Opposed To Vivisection' was dissolved before it ever got off the ground. It came in and went out like a damp squib! Yet, quite remarkably, seven years later, the gift of a delightful book came to me through the post; inscribed by a Jewish writer from out of the blue. It's title was 'Eternal Treblinka'; and it reiterated all that I'd implied; and for which I'd been severely censored. I tell you this: we need to be like Jesus: 'as wise as serpents yet as harmless as doves'; for He would not trust himself to man. He knew the deceptiveness that so frequently lurks beneath many an affluent surface.

Go labour on, spend and be spent. Your work to do the Saviour's will.

It was the way your Master went. Should not His servant follow still?

'Go labour on. It's not for nought. Your earthly loss is heavenly gain.

Men heed you, love and praise you not! The Master praises. What are men?'

- Horatius Bonar

A Prophet Passing By, As A Ship Of The Night

I don't know as to whether he was as engrossed with animal rights as we are, but a fellow once came in to my life whom I'll never forget. He was first publicised in the Bradford newspaper as a prophet. For like Elijah, he spent a memorable night within a cave, and began walking the streets with a shortened version of a Franciscan habit, plus a hold-all hung down his back. People often, at first, took a rise out of him, but to me - an ex Baptist minister reading electric meters - he epitomised a kindred spirit, but with a greater faith in God. Indeed, on meeting him within a park I told him of my past and how, at that time, I didn't know what God had planned for my future. Yet he was very sure concerning *his* calling. "I want my lifestyle to be a sermon and also a rebuke to the selfish way folk are living today" he replied. "God is everywhere around us, and people fail to grasp the reality of His presence".

How true were his words! We both shared the closeness of The Saviour in our lives, and *he* radiated Him. I invited him for tea the following Sunday, plus a visit to a local Church of which I'd been recently installed as part-time lay pastor (it was around 1958). Mother sensed that I'd actually invited Jesus in from the street. "His face glows with the light of Heaven" she said. After tea - which he literally devoured - I felt it would be embarrassing

to have both him and the sedate congregation sitting together. Perhaps he sensed it and asked to be excused to go on his way, just before we reached the open door of the spacious chapel. It was a relief to ones self, coward that I was!

A year or two later I met him, head on, outside the Alhambra theatre in Bradford. It was now winter and the weather very cold. "I've been, up to recently, sleeping out under hedges or with the sheep and it's been very cold" he said. "But a young couple have been very kind. They've given me shelter when they'd no need to. I've never had as much as a cold" he added; but I was feeling terribly chilly at nights". Perhaps it was to ease my own conscience that I offered him a five-pound note. He was at first reluctant to take it. But when I insisted he accepted, and the smile that literally shone through his piercing eyes melted my heart and made me want to cry. "He doesn't appear to preach salvation through the blood!" said a fellow believer. "Is he fright shy of getting a job?" said another. But I knew that Jesus lived in this self appointed vagrant of the Bradford streets who never ever begged or even asked for his next meal..

More than two decades were to pass before coming face to face with Bradford's cave man prophet once more. Sadness had filled my heart for the wife of one's youth had left me for another and I was reminiscing while driving through Apperley Bridge towards Rawdon. Yes, it was undoubtedly him; and his appearance had hardly changed except that he looked thinner and a little more drawn. He had smiled and waved as my car had slowly driven past him. But this was not unusual; he'd always waved and smiled to everyone.

Never Be Flippant On Tossing A Coin In Extremity

Well, I was on my own and not without money. Wanting to help him I offered a prayer to God for guidance and reverted to using a coin in the urim and thumin manner of the Old Testament. Having fifty pound in, mostly, five-pound notes – and seeing the fellow walking further in to the distance – I tossed a single coin repeatedly. 'Heads I give him five pound, and tales I cease from giving him any more. Well – no exaggeration! – I almost got in to a sweat as the notes I'd been guided to give him increased. The car was low in petrol and I'd travelled quite some distance. Well, it was only when I tossed the coin as to what I should do with my last five pound note that God reversed the process and the coin told me to keep the last of those notes for my own imminent need.

I tell you this: we must never gamble or treat God flippantly or lightly; but in times of urgent need such as this one God had clearly told me how much to give to Bradford's prophet on the last day I met him (now 20 years ago). And, as on previous occasions, he smiled gratefully- though he was at first reluctant to accept this £45 which he said was a lot!. I told him of the tea we'd shared at my humble home over about twenty years previous, and he remembered it more vividly than myself. Well, I may not see this fellow – who'd once been a Salvation Army officer and became a hermit after a broken love affair – on this earth ever again. But, please God, I'll meet him again in Heaven!.

Friends, there *are* saints on this earth – they are not of the stained glass variety. They let far more light shine through them! We meet them in the unlikeliest of places; and very many of these 'down to earth saints' are amongst the varying regiments of the animal activist movement. I don't know about yourself, but I'm honoured to be amongst such company; and I'll let you in to a secret: I sense that You – with all those feelings of a haunting inadequacy - may well be one of them! So – in the words of our Blest Redeemer; yes, and for the many animals too:

'Take heart little flock. It is the Father's will to give You of His Kingdom'.



Photo By Judi Hewitt