

Christian Vegetarian Association UK



WEEK ONE

WHY A VEGETARIAN DIET?



an IVU
Member Society

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Affiliated
Ministry



Introduction

Three compelling reasons why Christians should consider a vegetarian diet.



Why a vegetarian diet for Lent

Lent provides Christians with a fitting opportunity to give up meat in recognition of Christ's 40 day fast in the wilderness, whilst simultaneously experiencing the health benefits of a vegetarian diet. This opportunity is open to all Christians who feel moved to offer Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, tangible thanks. What better way to offer thanks to Christ than to emulate His boundless mercy and compassion? It's so easy and yet the effect is so significant. By saying no to the slaughterhouse and yes to the Lamb of God, we not only spare countless innocent souls immense suffering, we gain greater physical and spiritual well-being too.

Standing firmly against cruelty, vegetarianism provides Christians with the practical means of fulfilling Christ's call for greater mercy and compassion. Christ, the Lamb of God, brings us a new kind of flesh and a new kind of blood. Christ offers us His flesh and His blood; the flesh and blood of self-sacrifice and Perfect Love. Christians are duty-bound not to corrupt the sacred flesh and blood of Jesus Christ with the flesh and blood of cruelty and violence. We can live healthy lives without perpetuating the horrors of the meat industry. At the dawn of the new Millennium let's bring Isaiah's vision of Christ's peaceable kingdom, where the wolf dwells with the lamb and all creation lives in harmony, a step closer. Let us say no to the slaughterhouse and yes to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

*Antony Neesham
CVAUK General Secretary*

Vegetarianism is responsible stewardship.

In Britain alone, it is estimated that there are about four million vegetarians, and there are many reasons why people choose to become a vegetarian, I want to tell you about mine. I have no intention of telling people what they should or should not eat. It is only my intention to bring awareness of all the destruction, cruelty and abuse that is inflicted in this world by our desire to eat meat. It is then up to people to make their own choice as to what they do to help put things right.

I don't eat meat in protest against factory farming.

I don't eat meat to protest against the thousands of drugs and chemicals they use in today's meat products.

I don't eat meat because greedy third world landlords will throw poor tenants off their farms, and sell the land to multinational fast food companies.

I don't eat meat in protest at the amount of water needed to produce meat. Millions of people in this world die from the lack of water.

I don't eat meat in protest at the amount of rain forest that has been cut down to make grazing land for the fast food industry.

I don't eat meat because people in poor countries need to grow grain for the meat trade in western countries. The third world is forced to grow and export food to satisfy our indulgence, while their children die of starvation.

I don't eat meat as a protest against all the tonnes of wasted meat that is dumped every year. We use vast areas of land and billions of gallons of water to rear this wasted livestock. The world is short of both of these commodities; we cannot afford to waste them. (In 1996, the EU threw away £213 million of good food - to keep food prices high. This probably goes on every year.)

I don't eat fish because the seas have been abused for man's greed. Fish stocks depleted, million of mammals and birds killed in the process. Man has just raped the seas with his advanced equipment like there was no tomorrow.

Well I think looking at this list; my protest will last until I go home. Still if only we could all cut down on the amount of meat we eat, it would give the world more land, water and food to go around. Many will mock my protest, but God is my judge.

*Dave Burrus - Founder
Christian Response (Worldwide)*



Vegetarianism reflects both God's image & His peaceable Kingdom.

How should Christians relate to the rest of God's Creation? You will not find the answer to this question in the doctrines of the present day church; you could go to church all your life and not hear one sermon on the subject. In this age of global destruction, the church must surely come to accept that the care God's creation is a fundamental Christian responsibility.

Creation care has already gained momentum among the church hierarchy (See note A: C of E Lambeth 98 Resolution 1.8 Creation). Theologians have tackled the theological implications of incorporating animal and environmental care into the teaching of the church. (Prof. Rev. Andrew Linzey Mansfield College Oxford, Stephen H. Webb Prof. Of Religion Wabash College, Edward P. Echlin Fellow in theology, John Muddiman Fellow Mansfield College Oxford) and many well known Christian teachers are now proclaiming the message of creation care (Dr John Stott, Prof. Tony Campolo, Prof. Sir Ghillelan Prance, Rt Rev. Hugh Montefiore former Bishop of Birmingham, Father Sean McDonagh Missionary, Rev. J.R. Hyland Humane Religion and Dr John Austin Baker former

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Bishop of Salisbury. Rev. James Thompson, the animals' Padre). Yet in spite of all this activity, this most important and fundamental message is still being ignored by the grass roots of the church.

The continuous floods and catastrophes that have plagued the earth over the last two or three years, should show that we humans are not the centre of the universe; that we are not in charge. In the book of Job, God talks about the forces of nature and challenges Job to be humble. (Read Job Chapter 38 v 1 - 12, see note B). God is in charge and He created us to be His stewards "*Stewardship is servant hood; it is respecting and honouring God's handiwork in nature*" (Elaine Storkey President of Tear Fund).

The church has constantly refused to embrace God's love for all of His creation; acceptance of cruelty and violence has replaced love and compassion; indifference has replaced responsibility. This attitude has caused many to challenge the credibility of the church, doing untold damage to the great commission. Man's arrogance, greed and selfishness have marred most of his attempts to obey God, "*God made man in His own image but man decided to return the favour and made God in his image*" (Author unknown.).

Sad to say, Christians are still a part of this world, we proclaim an all-loving God but fail to keep the promises we make every time we recite the Lord's Prayer. When we say "*hallowed be your name*" we acknowledge our acceptance of the true nature of God as revealed in Christ, which should stir in us an attitude of love, reverence and awe towards Him, and a desire to care for all that belongs to Him. "*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth*" a promise to conquer all that is alien to God; by reflecting His image and being obedient to his perfect will. We then ask God to sustain, forgive and help us to keep these promises; we confirm that it is for His kingdom, His power and His glory that we make these promises. When we say the Lord's Prayer, we pledge ourselves to become partners with God in bringing in His peaceable Kingdom.

The Action Pack is an attempt to help Christians to embrace these promises without the need to become too deeply involved in theology. By asking basic creation care questions and offering guidance to the answers, we hope to eliminate the need for hours of bible study. We ask you to approach each question with an open mind. After reading a question, have a time of meditation before attempting to answer. Instead of concentrating on individual passages of the bible, try to look at the overall picture and base your answers on the character of God and to what you believe to be our responsibilities towards all of His creation; try to imagine Jesus as a member of your group and the answer He would give. Jesus replied. "*If you knew me, you would know my Father also*" (John 8 v 19)

We have tried to present an accurate translation of the original text, by referring to more than one version of the bible and quoting the most widely accepted version.

We trust you will find our lent course exciting and rewarding, we hope you will discover a Jesus whose life and death saved all of God's creation, not just

man, a Jesus you never knew.

He (Jesus) said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation". (Mark 16 v 15)

Don Gwillim CVAUK Chairman

Note A: Lambeth 98 Resolution 1.8 Creation;

This conference: (a) reaffirms the biblical vision of creation according to which: Creation is a web of inter dependent relationships bound together in the covenant which God the Holy Trinity has established with the whole earth and every living being.

(i) the divine Spirit is sacramentally present in creation, which is therefore to be treated with reverence, respect and gratitude;

(ii) human beings are both co-partners with the rest of creation and living bridges between heaven and earth, with responsibility to make personal & corporate sacrifices for the common good of all creation;

(iii) the redemptive purpose of God in Jesus Christ extends to the whole of creation.



Note B: Job 38 v 1-12 (NIV) Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?' "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place,

Resisting Evil.

Non-violence requires doing good and resisting evil. Many people do good but few people go on to resist evil. Doing good leads to honour and prestige. In our culture resisting evil can lead to persecution, rejection, and imprisonment. But resisting evil publicly, actively, peacefully, prayerfully is what will make the difference.

(Daniel Berrigan, a U.S. peace activist)

Overview.

The purpose of this action pack is an attempt to answer the question; should Christians condone the slaughter and consumption of animals? The enclosed articles try to answer these questions through a sound understanding of God's character and perfect will, rather than quoting isolated and misleading Old Testament passages. They demonstrate that when the Bible is unable to give a direct answer, our answer should be through knowledge of God's character, a reflection of God's image.



Translating and interpreting the bible has never been easy; compromises are necessary to arrive at an acceptable rendition (resulting in numerous versions.) The context of the translation may also reflect the translator's own understanding of God, and preachers' will chose a version and interpretation that satisfies their own understanding of God's character, resulting in denominations (see notes). Christians tend to select passages to support their desires; confirm deeply held convictions and protect selfish lifestyles. When they do this, they create an idol, a God in their own image.

The following articles show that we must discover for ourselves God's moral attributes and whether those attributes apply to animals. Past Christian teaching has rejected a need to care for animals but that does not mean that they were right. We must ask ourselves: Where does the bible state that God has one set of rules for man and another towards the rest of His creatures; is God's character and His love divisible?

To obtain absolute answers is difficult; the Old Testament is a collection of writings from the distant past, it contains prophecy (God's Word) and history (man's attempt to obey God's Word). The problem is to determine which is which. The answer is in the Gospels, they tell of a saviour, who came to give us a new humanity, and help clear away the fog that disfigures God's image in us. The Gospels bring us into conformity with God, through Jesus Christ, so people will begin to see in us, an image, a likeness, to the true character of God. Jesus reflects God's character perfectly, so we should only interpret the Old Testament through the teachings of Jesus in the new.

I now pass you over to Christian teachers who are far more qualified than myself to lead you through these studies. May the Lord bless and guide you, as you consider what they teach.

Don Gwillim

Overview Notes:

The following is an example of what I am trying to convey:

Some new versions of the Bible have altered the meaning of one of the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy 5 v 17, "Thou shalt not Kill" (KJV) has been replaced by "You shall not murder" (NIV).

a. A general consensus of opinion agree that the nearest translation is "Murder". However, there are places in the Old Testament where the same Hebrew word "ratsach" (which is used in the commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill") is applied to accidental killings and lawful executions.

b. Some killing is acceptable: self defence, self preservation (Noah after flood due to lack of vegetation) etc.

c. Murder can also mean to spoil or mar God's creation.

Isaiah called those who sacrificed animals murderers (Isaiah1:21). So biblically, the unnecessary killing of animals is still forbidden.

However, whether this new version strengthens your resolve to adopt a vegetarian diet, will now depend upon your understanding of God's character and perfect will.

Please read the following key passages:

God's Character (Mercy)

Proverbs 12v10 A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

Hosea 6v6, Matthew 9v12 & 12v7

I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Matthew 5v3-10

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

God's Character (A love that embraces all of His creation)

Genesis 9v13-17

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every

kind on the earth.

So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

Hosea 2v18

In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety.

Mark 1v12-13

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

John 10v11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Psalms 36v6

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast.

Mark 16v15

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Isaiah 66v3

But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man.

God's Perfect Will (Peaceable Kingdom)

Genesis 1v29-31

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--- I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

Isaiah 11v6-9

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. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain.

Romans 8v18-22

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been

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groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Revelation 21v4

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

If we believe that humans are the only important species on the earth, the pinnacle of creation or evolution, we will use (or abuse) the environment in a particular way. The world will be seen purely in terms of resources for us.

If we believe humans are only part of something deeper, more vast and more profound, then we will look to understand and place human activity within this wider framework and to understand how our actions affect the rest of the world.

Martin Palmer, Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture.

Isaiah

Isaiah is the prophet who more than any other forecasts the birth of Jesus. He is also the prophet with the most references to non-violence and universal respect for life. Jesus quotes Isaiah's "I delight not in your blood sacrifices" as He drives the animal killers out of the temple. Jesus refers to the vegetarian Isaiah more than to any other.

Author unknown.

Genesis and Revelation

Many people read the Old Testament as though it portrayed the "bad old days" before Jesus. But that's not an accurate picture. Actually, the first three chapters of Genesis link to the last book of the Bible, Revelation. They are like brackets of perfection around the sadness of life marred by sin, death, suffering, and hatred. In Genesis we learn that life didn't start out that way. In Revelation we find out it won't end that way either. But the Old and New Testaments take place between those brackets. Through Abraham, through Moses, ultimately in Jesus, God is hard at work to make things right.

Author Unknown

Distorted Moral Priorities

By Rev. James Thompson

If only people would read the Bible as it is rather than through the vista of Latin fathers or Puritan reformers! We are still making the Word of God of none effect by the traditions of men.

Yes, and I sense we are still, from a moral point of view, 'picking out gnats while we swallow camels'. We engineer a whole host of discussion over liturgies and ministries while we swallow, hook, line and sinker, man's exploitation of God's creation.

We fail to realise that what we sow as a race and species, we will undoubtedly reap. We have failed utterly to learn that life is basically sacred and interdependent, that to harm a part is ultimately to harm the whole.

God gave us human life and expects us to use it as faithful stewards within the world for which He gave His Son. Yet we exploit and abuse the larger part of creation using might as power.

We cram hens into cages where they are distorted into egg producing robots. We might even feed them with pellets containing their own excreta, if not the remains of their fellow creatures; and then we wonder why salmonella breaks out, why fresh killer diseases are on the increase. We might even have the audacity to question the justice of God in allowing us to suffer such retribution.

We perpetrate the horrific practice of vivisection and, paradoxically, expect physical health to come from moral sickness, good to be the reward for evil.

Christendom's prayers are confined to human need. and as for the animals which God cared for in His Ark and made two covenants, the churches have been unanimous in booting them out Yet the prime analogy He gave of Himself so that others might recognize Him, is in terms of the ways a righteous man cares for the helpless of another species entrusted to his care.

Thankfully, a change is slowly coming. A newer generation which no longer interprets 'immorality' solely in sexual terms but with far more relevant priorities is rising; yes, to blacken today's hypocrisy as we blacken yesterday's which piously read its family Bible, worshipped, condemned the illegitimate, concealed the imbecile, covered each female leg and condoned children being sent up chimneys and down mines.

From similar blatant hypocrisy may the Good Shepherd deliver us!

Sentiment towards animal suffering is more than futile unless it leads to action. It's no better than the Victorians who loved to 'weep buckets' over a melodrama in the music hall - but then, on their way home, they'd pass the street urchins without giving them a second glance.

Rev. James Thompson

Prayer

Extract from: Christian Ecology Link Prayer Guide (Sept.2000)

Obtainable from : Phillip Clarkson Webb, 15 Valley View, Southborough,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 0SY.

Lord, all things come from you, help us to thank you, praise you and honour you, not only by our thoughts and words, but also by our actions.

Father, forgive us for our greed and for the part we have played in destroying so much of the wonderful work of your hands.

Forgive us for the way we have exploited the Earth's resources for ourselves, while so many lack the basic necessities.

Please create in us a new heart and a new determination to follow a lifestyle that is gentle to the Earth and all it's creatures, and just to the poor.

Amen.

Prayer

Extract from: "Animal Rites" Andrew Linzey ISBN 0 334 02760 8

Almighty God you have given us temporary lordship of your beautiful creation. But we have misused our power, turned away from responsibility and marred your image in us.

Forgive us true Lord, especially for our callousness and cruelty to animals.

Help us to follow the way of your son, Jesus Christ, who expressed power in humility and lordship in loving service. Enable us by your spirit, to walk in newness of life, healing injury, avoiding wrong and making peace with all your creatures.

Amen

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"Isn't man amazing? He kills wildlife – birds, kangaroos, deer, all kinds of cats, coyotes, beavers, groundhogs, mice foxes and dingoes – by the millions in order to protect his domestic animals and their feed.

Then he kills domestic animals by the billions and eats them. This in turn kills man by the millions, because eating all those animals leads to degenerate and fatal health conditions like heart disease and cancer. So then man tortures and kills millions more animals to look for cures for these diseases.

Elsewhere, millions of other human beings are being killed by hunger and malnutrition because food they could eat is being used to fatten domestic animals.

Meanwhile, some people are dying of sad laughter at the absurdity of man, who kills so easily and so violently, and once a year sends out a card praying for "Peace on Earth".

*C. David Coates from the preface of his book:
Old MacDonalds Factory Farm.*

We need to bring home to people that all cruel behaviour, whoever and whatever the victims, is the expression of a deep flaw in human nature, and that all who oppose and fight it, in whatever form, are crusading against a curse that could destroy us all.

Bishop John Austin Baker.

Songs of Fellowship No. 742

Kingsway Music ISBN 0 85476 771 1

Great is the Darkness

by Noel Richards & Gerald Coates

Great is the darkness that covers the earth,
Oppression, injustice and pain.

Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,
Though many have come in Your name,
Watching while sanity dies,

Touched by the madness and lies.

Chorus

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray
Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus.
Pour out Your Spirit on us we pray.

May now Your church rise with power and love.

This glorious gospel proclaim.
In every nation salvation will come
To those who believe in Your name.
Help us bring light to this world,
That we might speed Your return.

Great celebrations on that final day,
When out of the heavens You come.
Darkness will vanish all sorrow will end,
And rulers will bow at Your throne.
Our great commission complete.
Then face to face we will meet.

Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all
living things, man will not himself find peace.

Albert Schweitzer

Edited by Don Gwillim

Constructive comments welcome, contact CVAUK (see front page)