

Christian Vegetarian Association UK



WEEK SIX

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE



an IVU
Member Society

CVAUK, Foresta, Pines Road, Liphook, GU30 7PL
Email: info@christianvegetarian.co.uk
Web Sites: www.cvauk.org & www.christianvegetarian.co.uk



Affiliated
Ministry

**FIVE COMPELLING REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD
CONSIDER A VEGETARIAN DIET**

To demonstrate our love for God

“God intends....our care of creation to reflect our love for the creator”

Revd John Stott

To help the poor and starving.

“It's officially estimated that should Westerners reduce their meat consumption by as little as 10% that would free enough land, water and energy to adequately feed at least forty million starving people.”

Anthony Neesham.

To stop the destruction of the environment.

“The time has come ... for destroying those who destroy the earth “

(Revelations 11v18).

To stop the cruelty and violence of the meat industry.

“We Christians talk a lot about holy living; sometimes about “baptised in the spirit”. However, our spiritual depth is mirrored for all to see. It's in the way we treat God's helpless”

Revd James Thompson

To prevent further damage to your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

A vegetarian diet tends to correspond closely with current dietary advice for healthful eating. Vegetarians are, on average, healthier than those who consume the typical Western diet and enjoy a lower incidence of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and diet related cancer.

Anthony Neesham.



Judaism and Vegetarianism

Letter written by Richard H. Schwartz Ph. D
Extract from **Jewish Vegetarian Newsletter**
sent to 3,650 North American Rabbi, dated 7th.
September. 1998



Dear Rabbi,

We are writing to share with you our serious concern about a widely accepted aspect of modern life which we believe contradicts Jewish teachings and harms us, our communities, and our planet: the mass production and widespread consumption of meat.

Along with a growing number of Jews, we believe that high meat consumption and the ways in which meat is produced today conflict with our tradition in at least five important areas:

1) While Judaism mandates that people should be very careful about preserving their health and their lives, numerous scientific studies have linked

animal-based diets directly to heart disease, stroke, many forms of cancer, and other chronic degenerative diseases.

2) While Judaism forbids tsa'ar ba'alei chayim, inflicting unnecessary pain on animals, most farm animals - including those raised for kosher consumers - are raised on "factory farms" where they live in cramped, confined spaces, and are often drugged, mutilated, and denied fresh air, sunlight, exercise, and any enjoyment of life.

3) While Judaism teaches that "the earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1) and that we are to be God's partners and co-workers in preserving the world, modern intensive livestock agriculture contributes substantially to soil erosion and depletion, air and water pollution, overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the destruction of tropical rain forests and other habitats, global warming, and other environmental threats.

4) While Judaism mandates bal tash'chit, that we are not to waste or unnecessarily destroy anything of value, and that we are not to use more than is needed to accomplish a purpose, animal agriculture requires the wasteful use of food, land, water, energy, and other resources.

5) While Judaism stresses that we are to assist the poor and share our bread with hungry people, over 70% of the grain grown in the United States is fed to animals destined for slaughter (it takes 8 to 12 pounds of grain to produce one pound of edible beef), while an estimated 20 million people worldwide die because of hunger and its effects each year.

In view of these powerful Jewish mandates to preserve human health, care about the welfare of animals, protect the environment, conserve resources, and help feed hungry people, and the extremely negative effects animal-centred diets have in each of these areas, we believe that committed Jews should sharply reduce or eliminate their consumption of animal products.

We could say "dayenu" after any of the arguments above, because each constitutes by itself a serious conflict between Jewish values and current practice which should impel Jews to seriously consider a plant-based diet. Combined, we think they make an even more compelling case for the Jewish community to address these issues.

We hope that you will consider and discuss with your congregants the ways that a meatless or low-meat diet would help bring about a world closer to the one envisioned by the Torah. A respectful dialogue about these concerns would also help revitalise modern Jewish life by demonstrating that our tradition can play an important role in solving modern problems.

We would be very pleased to receive your comments and suggestions and to work with you on these important issues. Enclosed is a page of suggested activities and contacts which we hope will be helpful to you. The enclosed fact sheets and the article, "What Diet Does God Prefer For Humans?" (from the Nishma Journal), provide further information.



Best wishes for a wonderful New Year, a Shanah Tovah that ushers in a period of greater commitment to the application of our rich heritage to the many critical problems that face our world.

Very truly yours,

Richard H. Schwartz, Ph. D.

Professor Emeritus (Mathematics), College of Staten Island, New York.

Author of Judaism and Vegetarianism and Judaism and Global Survival.

schwartz@postbox.csi.cuny.edu (718)982-3621 FAX: (718) 982-3631

My articles on Judaism and Vegetarianism are on the internet at

<http://www.schwartz.enviroweb.org>

We may pretend to what religion we please, but cruelty is atheism. We may make our boast of Christianity; but cruelty is infidelity. We may trust to our orthodoxy, but cruelty is the worst of heresies.

Humphrey Primatt



The Christian Argument for Vegetarianism

Excerpted from the book:

Christianity and the Rights of Animals, (Crossroad Publ. Co., NY) Rev. Dr. Andrew Linzey Director of Studies Centre for the Study of Theology University of Essex

It is well known that during the last thirty years or more, farmers have been under increasing pressure to tailor traditional farming methods to the needs of cost-effective production. Farming animals intensively has become the norm. It seems to me the only satisfactory basis on which we can oppose systems of close confinement is by recourse to the argument drawn from theos-rights. To put it at its most basic: animals have the right to be animals.

The natural life of a Spirit-filled creature is a gift from God. When we take over the life of an animal to the extent of distorting its natural life for no other purpose than our own gain, we fall into sin. There is no clearer blasphemy before God than the perversion of his creatures.

To the question: 'Why is it wrong to deny chickens the rudimentary requirements of their natural life, such as freedom of movement or association?' there is, therefore, only one satisfactory answer: Since an animal's natural life is a gift from God, it follows that God's right is violated when the natural life of his creatures is perverted.

Those who, in contrast, opt for the welfarist approach to intensive farming are inevitably involved in speculating how far such and such may or may not suffer in what are plainly unnatural conditions. But unless animals are judged to

have some right to their natural life, from what standpoint can we judge abnormalities, mutilations or adjustments? Confining a de-beaked hen in a battery cage is more than a moral crime; it is a living sign of our failure to recognise the blessing of God in creation.

What makes this situation all the more lamentable is the realisation that the use to which animals are put in intensive farming goes far beyond even the most generous interpretation of need. It will be obvious that humans can live healthy, stimulating and rewarding lives without white veal, pate' de foie gras, or the ever-increasing quantities of cheap eggs. The truth is that we can afford to be much more generous to farm animals than is frequently the case today.

Churches need to reflect in their own collective actions the sensitivity they frequently hope for in others. [In England], under present legislation, animals can be subject to intensive farming and are so on Church land. It is anomalous that the Church of England should allow on its land farming practices which many senior ecclesiastics oppose and which one bishop recently likened to an Auschwitz for animals.

The Christian argument for vegetarianism then is simple: since animals belong to God, have value to God and live for God, then their needless destruction is sinful. In short: animals have some right to their life, all circumstances being equal. That it has taken Christians so long to grasp this need must not worry us.

There were doubtless good reasons, partly theological, partly cultural and partly economic, why Christians in the past have found vegetarianism unfeasible. We do well not to judge too hastily, if at all. We cannot relive others' lives, or think their thoughts, or enter their consciences. But what we can be sure about is that living without what Clark calls "avoidable ill" has a strong moral claim upon us now.

Some will surely question the limits of the vegetarian world here envisaged. Will large-scale vegetarianism work in practice? I confess I am agnostic, surely legitimately, about the possibility of a world-transforming vegetarianism. But clairvoyance is not an essential prerequisite of the vegetarian option, and what the future may hold, and its consequences, cannot easily be determined from any perspective. What I think is important to hold on to is the notion that the God who provides moral opportunities is the same God who enables the world, slowly but surely, to respond to them. From a theological perspective, no moral endeavour is wasted so long as it coheres with God's purpose for his cosmos.

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The Biblical Basis of Vegetarianism

By Revd J.R Hyland

Carnivorism represents just as much of a fall from Grace as does any other sin.

Many who resist the fact that human beings were created as an herbivorous species point to the bible for their support of carnivorism. They quote the scripture which says that God gave humankind dominion over the animals as "proof" that the eating of flesh was sanctioned by the Creator.

But the dominion that was to be exercised by those made in the image of God was one of stewardship; of caring for the non human beings who, like themselves, were created as *nefesh chaya* -- living souls. There is no logical correlation between any kind of dominion and the consumption of the flesh of other beings. That is man's self-serving interpretation of dominion. The bible, itself, refutes this argument for dominion/carnivorism.

The verse of scripture immediately following the appointment of humans as caretakers for the rest of creation is followed by strict dietary instructions that limit all food consumption to non-flesh foods.

".. God said unto them.... have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." (Genesis 1: 28,29)

Having decreed the kind of food that was to sustain life on earth, the bible does not discuss diet again until the ninth chapter of Genesis. And by then the known world had already been destroyed by the great Flood. The scripture juxtaposes the report of that catastrophe with the information that the world had been defiled by the human beings to whom stewardship of the earth had been given. *"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways."* (Gen. 6:11)

A world that could no longer support the degeneracy of its inhabitants was washed away by the Flood. But the bible reports that there was a man who escaped the common fate. His name was Noah and the Lord said of him: "I have found you righteous in this generation." (Genesis 7:1-- Emphasis added) This is

a very qualified endorsement of Noah's character: he was the best that could be found in the midst of a depraved and violent society. And although there was to be a new beginning after the Flood, it was hardly a return to Paradise.

Just as life after the Fall in Eden was lived at a much lower level of existence, life after the Flood had deteriorated even further. The violence of the pre-Flood world reached the point where earth's inhabitants had begun to feed on the flesh of each



other. And Noah and his family, conditioned by that society, continued its carnivorism.

In some of the most chilling passages in the bible, the extent of human depravity is plainly stated. When its inhabitants first leave the Ark, they are told that the earth will not be washed away again even though "*the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*" This statement is followed by a summation of the state of affairs that now exists in the world. "*The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.*" (Gen. 9:2)



All creatures will fear and dread mankind, because human beings will abuse them. Obviously, the God of creation is not commending humans for their violent and abusive behaviour. The bible is simply stating that there was no miraculous imposition of a higher state of development on earth's inhabitants. The imagination of man's heart would continue to devise evil, and violence would remain a hallmark of life on earth.

This perversion of God's intent would also be apparent in man's continued carnivorism. "*Every living thing shall be meat for you; even as the green herb, have I given you all things.*" This verse of scripture is not an approval of carnivorism. It is a statement of fact: human beings will continue to consume the flesh of other creatures. But human chauvinism has prompted scholars to interpret this as God's blessing on man-turned-carnivore. Even their translation of this scripture tries to obscure its meaning.

The words have I given in the above-quoted scripture should read have I made. "Even as the green herb, have I made all things." This is the way that phrase is translated in other parts of the bible, and in this instance it would make it plain that God is not "giving" his creatures to man for food. Rather, the bible is reiterating that the Lord "made" all things: the green herbs of the fields as well as all living creatures. It is man who decided that he had a right to consume the bodies of other creatures. And in order to further bolster this claim for the right to eat other beings, he introduced sacrificial religion into the world.

Human beings have depicted God as enjoying the smell of burning flesh. The bible is replete with passages that describe the pleasure He took in the smell of animals being roasted on the altar. But of course it was the priests and the people, not God, who consumed their flesh.

Reaction against the travesty of animal sacrifice did not gain strength until the eighth century B.C. with the advent of the Latter Prophets of Israel. Not only did these prophets inveigh against sacrificial religion, they also reminded their people that a world which enjoyed the peace of God, and the kind of prosperity that comes from such peace, was a vegetarian world. Isaiah spoke of the time when "*the cow and the bear are friends*" and "*the lion eats straw like the ox.*" He also told how "*the wolf will live with the lamb... and a little child will lead them.*"

This vision of a non-violent, vegetarian world was always present in the consciousness of the Israelites. From the beginning, the Promised Land had been



described as a place "flowing with milk and honey." This was a peaceful, pastoral, image. Unfortunately, fallen human nature took control and made a mockery of that promise. *"I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its fruits and the goodness of it, but when you entered upon it you defiled it and made the home I gave you loathsome."* (Jer. 2:5-7 JB)

Although strongly repressed, people are aware of the violence entailed in the killing and eating of animals. The most horrendous crimes against humanity are referred to as "butchery." And in our own time, the violence of slaughter is hidden from the view of an urban society. The public is further protected from the reality of this process by the media. In a society where freedom of expression is taken for granted, no pictures of the slaughter process are ever shown. No investigative report ever details the way in which still-living animals are hoisted on huge hooks, with parts of their body already hacked from them. No documentary records the frenzy, the fear and the suffering of these creatures, doomed to such torment by the human lust for flesh.

But even more perverse is the failure of people of faith to confront a violent world with the reality of what it is doing. The Judeo - Christian community has as its heritage the biblical record of a past in which all beings lived at peace in a non-violent and vegetarian society. Its heritage also includes the promise of a millennial world in which the peace of a non-violence that includes vegetarianism is promised to those who look to the God of compassion, goodness, and love for their salvation.

And the world for which Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray is also a non-violent world in which goodness rules. It is a world in which God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven. Even the most recalcitrant human beings do not claim that in God's kingdom, animals are mutilated and killed in order to fulfil human lust.

The prayer that says "thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" is a commitment and a continuing prayer for God's love, goodness, and compassion to rule the world and overcome the lust, cruelty, and selfishness that characterises the rule of man on earth.

Reprinted from the July/August 1996 issue of Humane Religion.

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Prayer

We give thanks, Lord God, for the men and women who have given their lives to the protection of your beautiful world. We pray that their labours and sacrifices may not be in vain, that the torch they have lit, will be carried by the rest of us for as long as it takes to free your world from; violence, cruelty, pollution and degradation, the bitter harvest of human greed.

Amen

Inspired by a prayer in Christian Ecology Link Jan. 2001 Prayer diary.

Does Meat Consumption Corrupt The Eucharist?

By Antony Neesham



Whether deemed Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, Virtualism, Dynamism or Symbolism, The Eucharist epitomises the profound fecundity of Jesus Christ; a proclamation of peace, an outpouring of compassion and ultimately revelation of Love Eternal.

The night before He was betrayed Christ shared the Passover with His disciples, initiating what is variously referred to as Holy Mass, Lord's Supper, Breaking of Bread, Holy Communion and Eucharist: "Jesus took bread, and when He had said the blessing He broke it and gave it to His disciples. 'Take it and eat,' He said, 'this is my body'. Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He handed it to them saying, 'drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (*Matthew 26:26-28*.) Accepting The Eucharist, Christians commit themselves to the New Covenant; a covenant sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ and indelibly inscribed with His testimony to boundless love, mercy and compassion.

Proponents of butchery within Christianity invariably cite *Matthew 26:17-29* and similar verses in *Mark* and *Luke* as irrefutable evidence that Christ partook of the Paschal Lamb during the Passover. This is perhaps indicative of an innate failure to fully comprehend the supreme soteriological ramifications of the Last Supper. Undeniably, a traditional Jewish Passover would have included a lamb roasted whole. Curiously, however, events transcribed by the Evangelists provide no mention of Christ or, indeed, the Apostles partaking of the traditional Paschal Lamb before, during or after the Last Supper. Many interpret this anomaly as evidence that the Last Supper was a unique event established to supersede the traditional Jewish Passover. There was no need to slaughter a helpless infant quadruped, the New Passover would be sealed with a new kind of flesh and a new kind of blood; the sacramental flesh and blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Offering Himself willingly, Christ terminated traditional sacrifice, which Clement of Alexandria described as an invention by man to be a pretext for eating flesh, and inaugurated a new Kingdom akin to His Father's original Edenic Will. "God said, 'look to you I give all the seed-bearing plants everywhere on the face of the earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this will be your food. And to all the wild animals, all the birds of the heaven and all the living creatures that creep along the ground, I give all the foliage of the plants as their food.' And so it was." (*Genesis 1:29-30*). Partaking of Christ's flesh and blood, Christians are received into the New Kingdom. Perpetuating bloodshed beyond The Eucharist represents an affront to the New Kingdom and, indeed, is no less than a blatant transgression of Christ's New Covenant. The Lamb of God remains the one and final sacrifice.

The artificial production, violent slaughter and needless consumption of defenceless lambs, calves, chickens and pigs does not only offend the Spirit of

The Eucharist it corrupts its very nature within the partaker. Christ teaches us that the body is the temple of the spirit and therein both the Prince of Peace and the product of butchery are unable to harmoniously abide. For what represents love, mercy and compassion at the highest conceivable level, cannot remain untainted when directly exposed to the consequences of violence, butchery and greed. “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let us examine ourselves, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon themselves.” (*1 Corinthians 11:27-29*).

The boundless love of God, expressed through The Eucharist, should inspire each and every Christian to strive for the ‘greater good’. Accepted in the manner in which it’s offered, The Eucharist charges the partaker with universal compassion. The Eucharist, Christ’s New Covenant, is a gift without reserve which if embraced completely has the capacity to transport the whole created order to an utopian level of peace and prosperity.

Give peace a chance; try a vegetarian diet either today or, alternatively, during the period of Lent.



Questions

1. Do you believe that God’s perfect world will be a Peaceable Kingdom?
2. Are Christians responsible for the care of all God’s creatures?
3. Do you agree that by adopting a vegetarian diet, you would be helping to fulfil the promise you make to God every Sunday when you pray “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?
4. If all Christians adopted of a vegetarian diet, would this be a major step towards:
 - A) Showing by our actions our love of God and all that He has created?
 - B) Accepting our God given responsibility to be good Stewards?
 - C) Looking after the temple of the Holy Spirit, by adopting a healthier diet?
 - D) Being just to the poor by helping the starving people of this world?
 - E) Sustainable development. Preserving the beauty of God’s creation for the benefit of future generations?
 - F) Help keep the peace in an over populated world with shrinking resources?

We are now at the end of the study and we thank you for taking the time to discover a Christians responsibility towards all of God's creatures. If you now desire to change your lifestyle to reflect God's Peaceable Kingdom, please act now with others in the group and declare the following:

Declaration of the Peaceable Kingdom

We affirm our belief in the peaceable Kingdom;

That God the Creator willed a peaceable creation for all creatures represented in Genesis by the original command to be vegetarian (1.29-30);

That the prophets witness to a time when this Kingdom will be fulfilled as Isaiah says "the lion will lie down with the calf ... they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (Is. 11. 1-9);

That this Kingdom is proclaimed by our Lord Jesus Christ who provides us with a model of lordship expressed in service: caring for the poor, healing the sick, and washing the feet of his disciples;

That the Spirit of Jesus moves in our hearts to recognise the suffering and travail of the entire creation (Rom. 8. 18-24) and to minister to other creatures as Christ has ministered to us;

That this Kingdom will be manifest in the reconciliation of all creatures with Christ in a new heaven and earth where death and pain will be no more;

In recognition of these beliefs we seek to become signs of the peaceable Kingdom by living as far as possible non-violently with other creatures.

We anticipate the coming Kingdom by adopting now the diet of the age to come and living as ethical vegetarians. Our daily prayer - as our Lord taught us - is that "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

We invite our fellow Christians to pray this prayer with us and to exercise a Christ-like ministry to all God's sentient creatures.

Rev. Dr. Andrew Linzey

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Please share your determination to live as Vegetarian Christian. Encourage others to participate in another group study during the year in preparation for a "Vegetarian Diet for Lent" next year.

Further Action Packs can be obtained from "CVAUK" or download booklets (PDF) from www.cvauk.org

Songs of fellowship No 664
Kingsway Music ISBN 0 85476 771 1

Beauty for Brokenness

(God of the Poor)

By Graham Kendrick

Beauty for brokenness,
Hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world,
This is our prayer;
Bread for the children,
Justice , joy, peace;
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Havens from fear,
Cities for sanctuary,
Freedoms to share;
Peace to the killing-fields,
Scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
His cross for the pain.

God of the poor

Shelter for fragile lives,
Cures for their ills,
Work for the craftsmen,
Trade for their skills;
Land for the dispossessed,
Rights for the weak,
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak.

Rest for the ravaged earth,
Oceans and streams,
Plundered and poisoned -
Our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
Carelessness, greed;
Make us content with
The things that we need.

God of the poor
Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion we pray:
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain;
Come change our love
From a spark to a flame.

God of the poor

Refuge from cruel wars,

Lighten our darkness,
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again;
Until the nations
Learn of your ways,
Seek your salvation



Edited by Don Gwillim

Constructive comments welcome, contact CVAUK (see front page)