



VOLUME 85

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RECOVERING OUR KINSHIP WITH ANIMALS

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A resident at the Thompson House at Northern Dutchess Hospital in Rhinebeck, N.Y., gets a holiday greeting from Zena, a 4-year-old miniature dachshund.

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THE IMAGE WORKS

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The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness* magazine and related website projects, seeks to give voice to a liberation Gospel of peace and justice and to promote the concrete activism that flows from such a Christianity. Founded in 1917 by Irving Peake Johnson, an Episcopal Church bishop, *The Witness* claims a special mission to Episcopalians and other Anglicans worldwide, while affirming strong partnership with progressives of other faith traditions.

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The Witness

Editor/Publisher

Julie A. Wortman

Senior Editor

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Associate Editor

Marianne Arbogast

Staff Writer

Camille Colatosti

Media Review Editors

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Bruce Campbell

Website Editor/Producer

Ethan Flad

Magazine Production

KAT Design, Camden, ME

Website Design

Jim Dugan

Development/Marketing

Wes Todd

Office Manager

Alice Devine

Controller

Roger Dage

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Contributing Editors

Martin Brokenleg, Kelly Brown Douglas,

Carmen Guerrero, Mary E. Hunt,

Jay McDaniel, Bill Wylie-Kellermann

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Offices: To reach Julie Wortman:

8 Ridge Road, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860

Tel: (207)372-6396.

To reach Wes Todd:

232 Main Street, Thomaston, ME 04861

Tel: (207)354-7041

Subscription questions — Alice Devine:

PO Box 1170, Rockport, ME 04856

Tel: (207) 763-2990

Website: www.thewitness.org

LETTERS

Proverbs of Ashes

In your excellent, thought-provoking interview with Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker (April 2002), Ms. Parker stated they were working on unraveling the complex, troubling way John's Gospel simultaneously blames Jews for Jesus' death and offers an alternative to atonement.

Looking at John's Gospel as a snippet of history which may repeat itself in principle from culture to culture, but not likely in exact form, nor necessarily carried through in the same culture to the same extent, we may consider that the Jews of John's Gospel were a religious culture in formative state seeking to define themselves in light of the world and their tradition as God's elect. This group is distinguished in part from other groups, established or on the rise. John's Jesus calls Nathaniel truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit! (NRSV). There were other groups as well, however, this group is the one that gained supremacy in the Temple and synagogues and cast Jesus' followers out. It is inaccurate to generalize John as pointing to all of Israel (now generalized to Jews) as John's perceived enemy, either in that day or today.

The issue that emerges for me is that this group perceived themselves as a microcosmic representation of Israel and thus Israel's doorkeepers. They were ready to defend what they perceived as Israel's cause at any cost. If Israel is considered the priest-people for the world and thus representative of the world, then the events during the time of Jesus show the human condition as potentiating, despite a perceived connection with God, our propensity to miss the message and acts of God in our blindness to control, protect, and preserve truth (which, if eternal, is also indestructible) and in so doing to exclude from the religious conversation, even with violence, those who embody the work and message of God. Thus the Jews of that day excluded the Jesus followers, and the Christians of today exclude modern Jews, and other peoples who also embody, to no greater or lesser degree than we, the work and message of God.

I disagree in part with Ms. Brock's statement that, "What saves life isn't death." What is sav-

ing in the death of Jesus is the fact that though we are vulnerable to its power, it doesn't have the final say. For Jesus not to have died would have placed him in an exclusive class of one, in which there is no community. Jesus having died through submission to that which humans are subject without recourse is to have community to the ultimate degree with his fellow humans. The resurrection then demonstrates God's power over the most formidable enemy we have. With this understanding we are saved from retreating because of death. Violence, the tool of death, then, also loses its force because its ultimate end upon its victim is disemboweled.

Death saves us from the limitations of the former life. Please don't limit my statement to the traditional born-again idea. But if death were the final end, then the freedom would be pointless. Therefore, resurrection empowers us after death to live the renewed life. Without death, there would be no resurrection.

This all can be viewed in the context of a God who loves only and neither condones nor uses death, and thus violence. But it speaks of a God who takes the most destructive human-created implement and turns it against its original purpose and result in favor of and for the benefit of those whose intents were counter to the love that God intends. So love (Johannine love) creates a new place for us so that where Christ is we may be also, in this life or any other. It doesn't glorify death but illuminates the value and power of life.

We who abhor and stand against violence then know that our ultimate end is always the gift of life. Understanding God's work of transforming, or redirecting, death also helps us avoid creating a neo-morality of non-violence that would ideologically exclude those who commit violence from the grace of God, because violence, whether moral perpetrator or victim, cannot overcome the life that is a gift through Jesus Christ.

Just some rudimentary thoughts. Great article. Fantastic magazine.

Jim Reid, pastor

Colfax United Methodist Church.

Colfax, LA



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Needed: an ethics of responsibility

Thanks for Julie Wortman's powerful clarion call to join in the "global movement for social change" and the other articles in the June 2002 issue of *The Witness*. She defines the criteria of being a movement activists as planning civil disobedience, doing jail time, organizing a direct action or protest and walking a picket line and she could have added the other movement activities that she has done. I am in favor of all the things she and the other authors have commended in this issue. But I fear that the one thing she and almost all the others have omitted is the one thing that can actually achieve social change, namely, full participation in electoral politics. By that I mean running for public office, seeking and persuading good candidates to run, campaigning for them, lobbying elected officials and others, seeking legal recourse and, finally, voting, etc. (See my highly edited article in the October 1992 issue of *The Witness*.)

I know that movement activists are highly allergic to electoral politics ("my least favorite activity," says Rebecca Gordon), for they usually claim that it is totally corrupt, simply the tool of the corporations and thus hopeless. Therefore, it can be ignored, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the movement activists. I believe that this allergy was explained long ago by Max Weber in his famous essay of 1919 entitled, "Politics as a Vocation." He distinguishes two types of ethics, as "ethic of ultimate ends" and an "ethic of responsibility." The former lays emphasis exclusively on purity of motive or intention; the latter lays emphasis on consequences and teaches that "one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's action." Weber concludes that the only ethic which has a place in politics is the ethics of responsibility. "Anyone who fails to see this is a political infant." (I might add that the American version of the ethic emphasizing only purity of motive is derived from our tradition of puritan and pietistic religion.) This is why when movement activists "vote their conscience" they are "rewarded with their worst nightmare." (See Paul Winter's letter in the March 1991 issue of *The Witness* and my response in the June 1991 issue.) Gary Trudeau's *Doonesbury* on election day 2000 had it right: "If you'd like to see abortion

recriminalized, if you're for unrestrained logging and drilling, and for voluntary pollution control, and if you favor more soft money in politics, then the choice today is clear. ... Vote Nader." Please, let's have an issue of *The Witness* on electoral politics.

Owen C. Thomas
Berkeley, CA

A witness shared

Enclosed is our usual contribution to *The Witness*, which gets better and better. Also, a copy of our letter to the IRS refusing 26 percent of our Federal income tax. There's no witness if it isn't shared, so I'm sharing it with you.

Emmett Jarrett (and Ann Scheibner)
St. Francis House
New London, CT

To the IRS: In 1849 Henry David Thoreau wrote, "I meet this American government ... directly and face to face, once a year — no more — in the person of its tax gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and ... the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then." Thoreau wrote of a government that permitted slavery and that went to war with its neighbor, Mexico, to obtain territory on which it had no legitimate claim.

We write to you in the same spirit. While slavery has been abolished in the United States, we are still in possession of the territory we took from Mexico through superior military force. We are also in the process of completing a military intervention in Afghanistan and embarked as well on an unlimited and undefined "war on terrorism." In pursuit of this "war," we are subsidizing wars in Israel/Palestine, the Philippines and Colombia. The New York Times reports today that the Bush administration has decided on a policy of "pre-emptive action" against states it deems to harbor terrorist groups and to intervene militarily in Iraq if it is not able to overthrow the government there in other ways. The moves by the government to limit domestic civil liberties during the current crisis is also ominous. ...

As Christians, and as people committed to non-violence ... we cannot support such policies. ...

Because justice doesn't just 'happen'

by Julie A. Wortman

When Sue Hiatt — the woman who engineered the first ordinations of women to the Episcopal Church priesthood — died last spring, her many friends and former Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) colleagues moved swiftly with plans for the modest memorial eucharist Sue had requested. But the quiet, somber event Sue had envisioned never took place.

Instead, several hundred church feminists and peace-and-justice advocates showed up in Cambridge at the appointed time spoiling for a celebration and reunion. And, aided by a festive beating of drums and the conviviality of a standing-room-only crowd of allies and old friends, that's the kind of service they created. For to remember and celebrate Sue's life required a liturgy expansive enough to match the passion of a vocation to justice.

As her longtime friend, colleague and fellow 1974 ordinand Carter Heyward noted in the homily, Sue had all her life been at heart an organizer who saw the Episcopal Church "as a strategic location of social, economic and political power that needed to be organized and put to work on behalf of social justice." Sue lived, Heyward said, "on the basis of a tenacious faith in the capacities of her brothers and sisters, including white affluent folks like most of us here today, to help 'make justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream,' and in our willingness to step forward and offer ourselves as laborers in God's harvest. In this way, Sue Hiatt was an heir of the same hope and enthusiasm that have historically shaped the great Christian movements for social justice and the irrepressible passion for justice among such great Anglican divines as F. D. Maurice, William Temple, John Hines, Verna Dozier, William Stringfellow and Desmond Tutu."

Not that Sue was always a buoyant, optimistic activist. Her friends knew all too well Sue's tendency to a "pessimism, even at times

a cynicism and anger that bordered on despair" over a "world in crisis and a church too seldom up to the task."

But Sue Hiatt never gave up the struggle. She recognized, Heyward told us, that "we have to organize! Justice doesn't just 'happen.' We can't do it alone, not as 'heroes,' not as Lone Rangers or Superwomen or Spidermen. We must do it together."

I probably wasn't the only one in the congregation that high-spirited evening who wondered, "What is holding us back?" Some point to a lack of leadership at the highest levels of church governance. Indeed, many now hope that the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will possess the needed charisma for inspiring Anglicans to activism. Certainly, last July's announcement that Williams would succeed evangelical conservative George Carey has been a great encouragement to Anglican progressives. For one thing, Williams opposes the U.S. War against Terrorism. Williams happened to be at Trinity Wall Street when the plans crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11. A few days later he wrote, "No 'Star Wars' shield of missile defence could have averted last Tuesday's atrocities. No intensive campaign to search and destroy in Afghanistan will guarantee that it will never happen again. If we fear and loathe terrorism, we have to think harder. Indiscriminate terror is the weapon of the weak, not the strong; it's commonly what the 'strong' aren't expecting, which is why they are vulnerable to it. It is the weapon of those who have nothing to lose. If we want it not to happen, we have to be asking what it means that the world has so many people in it who believe they have nothing to lose."

Williams is also a strong advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people in the life of the church. "Having been closed out of relationship with the Archbishop of Canterbury during the tenure of the current

Archbishop, we look forward to someone who knows us, our faith in God, and our commitment to the Church," said Michael Hopkins, President of Integrity, an organization whose mission is to be a witness of LGBT persons in the Episcopal Church and to the world.

Undoubtedly, once he takes office next January, Williams will do all he can to use his position on behalf of peace and justice. But the key service Williams could render will be to help Anglicans understand not only that justice doesn't just happen, but also that justice is happening. Everywhere I go, I encounter people of faith doing amazing peace-and-justice work. We tell their stories in the pages of this magazine every month — and we regularly post their global witness on our website (www.thewitness.org).

But there is more that is needed. Because the organizing we all long for — the organizing that prevents the sort of depleting pessimism and despair that Sue Hiatt fought against and that makes us famished for celebration and reunion — is the kind that helps us stay connected between conferences, mobilisations and trainings so that we don't feel like we are the only people standing up to the powers and principalities of this world and so that we can show up for one another when numbers and diversity count.

We here at *The Witness* want to help make this kind of organizing possible. With the generous help of the KRB Group, a San Francisco-based foundation promoting peace and justice work in the Episcopal Church, I'm pleased to announce that we are building the web infrastructure to create a new network of faith-based groups and church activists, committees and commissions and to facilitate their interaction so that they can become the force for peace and justice Sue Hiatt dreamed of.

Watch for the changes. We think Sue would approve. ●

Julie A. Wortman is Witness editor/publisher.

'A world of unending relationship'

by Marianne Arbogast

THIS TIME LAST YEAR, we were preparing this issue of *The Witness* on "Recovering our kinship with animals" for publication in December. Then came Sept. 11 and, with the rest of the country, we were jolted out of our routine and into an urgent focus on the attacks and their aftermath. We set aside the topic of animals and started thinking about reli-

gious fundamentalism and pluralism, about mass detentions and a culture of punishment, about faith and patriotism.

Yet curiously, as I think back to the days following the attacks, one of the things that stands out most clearly in my memory is an experience with an animal. For some weeks, I had been helping to care for Lucy, my friend Susan's cat. Lucy had cancer.

While Susan and her family were on vacation, I took turns with other neighbors going to visit Lucy, feeding and stroking her, and changing the pain patches that kept her comfortable. It was a kind of hospice care, not unlike my caregiving responsibilities for my 100-year-old great aunt, who lives with me.

Lucy died on Sept. 14, and her backyard



© J. Kevin Dunn

funeral was one of two neighborhood gatherings I took part in that week — the other being a hastily assembled meeting for prayer and reflection on the attacks, culminating in a candlelight walk and vigil on a nearby freeway bridge.

The second gathering offered to friends and neighbors the chance to share our grief over the suffering of the victims, and to support one another in our lonelier grief over the paths our nation chooses that lead so inevitably to war. The first offered the chance to honor a very particular grief over the loss of a much-loved companion.

Like many people, I experienced after the attacks a heightened awareness of what mattered in my life. Both of these gatherings felt important. Both, I'd argue, could be seen as expressions of resistance to the logic of Sept. 11, in which the lives of individuals — human and non-human — are of little consequence.

In late September of last year, *The Christian Science Monitor* ran a story reporting that "since the attacks on the World Trade Center, record numbers of New Yorkers have volunteered to adopt homeless cats and dogs." Although part of the response arose from concern for animals who had lost their human companions, "the desire to connect with an animal in need ended up transcending the immediate impact of the events of Sept. 11," the *Monitor* reported, quoting a shelter worker who said that people were "just suddenly interested in any animals we have."

"I've been going up to strangers on the street and asking if I can pet their dogs," a woman who came to adopt a dog was quoted as saying. Another woman, who went home with two kittens, said, "I thought to myself, 'There's got to be some way of making a blessing come from this.' These kittens are going to be that blessing."

Could it be that this desire to connect with animals was an intuitive movement toward the sources of healing we most desperately need at a time when the world sys-

tem we have constructed — a system utterly dependent on the exploitation of other humans, as well as animals and the living earth — threatens to destroy us?

Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan [see interview, p. 14] tells of the traditional native stories and healing ceremonies that restore people to their proper place in the world. They are "stories of a world of unending relationship" in which bonds with animals are central, she says ("First People," from *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*, ed. Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, Brenda Peterson, Ballantine, 1998).

"The stories that are songs of agreement and safekeeping, and the ceremonies that are their intimate companions, tell us not only how to keep the world alive, they tell us how to put ourselves back together again. In the language of ceremony, a person is placed — bodily, socially, geographically, spiritually and cosmologically — in the natural world extending all the way out into the universe. This placing includes the calling in of the animal presence from all directions."

Today "we stand between destruction and creation, between life and death, for other species and ultimately for ourselves," Hogan writes. The events of last September — and the war that followed — were a tragic reminder of that. Perhaps, if we are to find healing and restoration to our human place, we cannot do it on our own. The stories of our own tradition also teach that we share the garden with other earth-creatures formed from the same clay.

If we lose our relationship with the animals, Hogan says, "some part of our inner selves knows that we are losing what brings us to love and human fullness. Our connection with them has been perhaps the closest thing we have had to a sort of grace."

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of *The Witness*.

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

— Genesis 9:12-16 (RSV)

The beginning of a revolution?

by Marianne Arbogast

THIS AUGUST, an Episcopalian high-school student in Cincinnati organized a downtown youth event called Compassionfest to promote vegetarianism and respect for animals. In the same city, animal-rights activists convinced Catholic bishop Daniel Pilarczyk to ask parishes to forego turtle racing and "rat-spinning" games at their summer festivals.

John Dear, a Jesuit priest and peace activist who has served as executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, wrote a pamphlet on Christianity and vegetarianism that is being distributed through PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). And if you spot the slogan "WWJE?" it's not a misprint, but a campaign by the Christian Vegetarian Association asking people to consider what Jesus would eat today.

Limited though they might be, these efforts seem to point to a growing impulse among people of faith to examine the human treatment of animals more seriously.

"There's no question that people's consciousness is growing," says Bruce Friedrich, a PETA staff member who spent time in prison with John Dear following a 1993 ploughshares action in which they hammered and poured blood on a nuclear fighter bomber. "I think we are at the beginning of a revolution in the church with regard to how animals are viewed. The animal movement has drawn more and more people of faith who want to help the church move along in its understanding that God's covenant is not just with human beings. I think that mainstream theological scholarship will come to embrace animals for the same reason that it had to recognize that human relationships like slavery and subjugation of women were out of keeping with God's ideal, how God wants us to live our lives."



ANIMAL MOVEMENT

We're not the only ones that praise

Scholars point out that the tendency to view humans as separate from the rest of creation is not a biblical perspective.

"The whole idea of 'animal' as an utterly distinct category from the human is foreign to biblical ways of thinking," says Jay McDaniel, a process theologian who has articulated an ecological Christianity that views animals as beings with intrinsic value in and for themselves. "We humans come from the dust like other creatures, we're creatures of the flesh like other creatures. And it was obvious to biblical authors that we're not the only ones that feel, we're not the only ones that suffer, we're not the only ones that praise, as the psalmists would recognize."

Process thought offered McDaniel a way to integrate his intuitions about animals into a theological framework.

"I grew up with cocker spaniels, and from a very early age it was obvious to me that animals have souls — if by souls you mean a seat of awareness, that they're subjects of their own lives, that they count and that they're kin to us. But nobody invited me to link that with my Christian faith until my discovery of process theology in seminary, and especially John Cobb. Process thought did talk about a God who loves animals no less than humans, a God who lures each living being toward satisfaction relative to the situation at hand, a God who shares in the suffering of all living beings."

For McDaniel, this acknowledgement of spiritual kinship is connected with ethical responsibility.

"Justice can begin with anger or it can begin with love," he says. "My in-laws are birders, and I would have to say, in some way, that their religion, their spirituality, lies in delight and appreciation of the beauty of birds. There are many people in this world that have had similar relations with companion animals, and we would be quite incomplete without those other living beings who are sources of such grace in our lives. To be awed and amazed and moved by their sheer beauty becomes a foundation to want to care for them and treat them justly."

Concern for animals is a matter of social justice as well as ecological sustainability, McDaniel believes. In his 1990 book, *Earth, Sky, Gods, Mortals* (Twenty-Third Publications), he quotes from a 1988 report by a group of theologians commissioned by the World Council of Churches: "Concern for animals is not a simple question of kindness, however laudable that virtue is. It is an issue of strict justice.' ... That we may not have considered 'justice' applicable to ani-

mals has something to do with how we have conceived the 'societies' in which we live. If we think un-ecologically, we think of societies as 'human societies' and of 'justice' as 'justice for humans.' It is as if we are insulated from nature, and nature from us, by an invisible boundary."

The best news for animals

Despite the development of multiple environmental theologies in recent years, relatively few theologians have focused on the status of animals as individuals or the human-animal relationship, McDaniel says. Of those that have, the most prominent is Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest and professor at Oxford University, who began writing about Christianity and animal rights in the 1970s and has continued to provide a theoretical framework for Christian animal advocacy and activism.

"He set the tone and charted the ground," McDaniel says. "Andrew proceeds from a really traditional perspective — he's grounded in the biblical tradition and he knows his history of Christianity well. He would say that in the history of Christianity, it's probably been the lives of the saints that have been the best news for animals, and the theologians have not been such good news."

Linzey has documented an impressive history of concern for animals reflected in the lives of numerous saints and Christian writers from Tertullian to C.S. Lewis. Advocating for the "theos-rights" of animals as creatures of God, Linzey holds up the biblical vision of the Peaceable Kingdom as an image of God's desire for harmony in creation, and the self-giving life of Jesus — with its focus on service to "the least" — as a pattern for moving toward that harmony.

Nature as we usually understand it falls short of that harmony, Linzey says.

"If one takes the natural world as it is now as a source of moral illumination, then it is difficult to see how one could support the moral movements of the last hundred years — emancipation, justice and equality — because nature as we understand it appears to make very little room for individual rights," he said in a 1993 interview with *The Witness*. "It was once thought — and the Christian tradition helped sanction this — that the relationship between men and women was essentially unequal. It was thought there was something given in nature, that differences between race or gender were such that relationships of equality and harmony were not possible. It seems to me that moral insight begins at the point at which we say,



A feminist-vegetarian ethic:

*an interview with
Carol Adams*

Carol Adams is an ecofeminist theologian, writer and activist who has worked extensively in the fields of domestic violence and animal advocacy.

The Witness: How do you see the connection between oppression of animals and the oppression of women and other human beings?

Carol Adams: For one thing, we often exhibit an anxiety about what we define as human, and historically Western culture has controlled that definition very tightly. For a long time what was human was really white male. There's a feminist historian who said the period of time after the American Revolution was a very traumatic time period for women, because you had all this talk about human rights and yet women's rights were receding during that time. Human was defined as man, and implicitly it was defined as white.

We get movements that try to expand the definition of human because the recognition is that when something is defined as not human it does not have to be taken seriously — it can be abused, it can be misused. When I see the pin, "Feminism is the radical notion that women are human," I can't agree with that. I don't want to simply redefine human to include women. I want to problematize the definition of human, and especially the theological point of view that there's God, us humans and everyone else in this hierarchy.

Secondly, we can't accept the notion that the ends justify the means. And it seems to me that both meat-eating and the oppression of other people are justified because the end result is something that people want. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, I talk about the structure of the absent referent, that animals are made absent to meat-eating because they're killed. And they're made absent conceptually — people really don't want to be reminded that they're eating a dead cow, a butchered lamb, a slaughtered pig. And the absent referent then becomes a free-floating thing. For instance, meat becomes a metaphor for what happens to women. Other beings who are not held in high regard may be equally victimized by the means/ends dichotomy.

Thirdly, I'm against violence. Do the least harm possible. Oppression requires violence and implements of violence, and this violence usually involves three things: objectification of a



"I'm acting contrary to the order of the world as it now appears to me."

What about all the suffering?

McDaniel also considers the violence in nature as a theological problem.

"If you're honest, you've got to ask the question, what about all the suffering?" he says. "When the fox chases the rabbit, maybe the rabbit is giving himself to the fox — but it doesn't look like that. And maybe that last moment of agony is, in fact, ecstatic union with the divine — but it doesn't look like that."

In his 1989 book, *Of God and Pelicans*, he presents the pattern of pelican reproduction as a theological dilemma. The mother pelican lays two eggs, he explains, one of which hatches two days after the first. If the first chick survives, the second is rejected, kicked out of the nest and killed or left to starve.

"That second pelican chick became for me a kind of symbol of all that suffers," he says. "I had to say, where is God for that chick? And is this God's great design? Were predator-prey relations part of the plan? Well, what kind of God is that? That's a God who cares for the big picture but not the particulars, for the eco-systems but not the nodes in the web. And that's not the God of Jesus Christ.

"One person that worried about that, strangely enough, was John Wesley. He had this funny little sermon called 'The General Deliverance' in which he imagined heaven as a place to which all animals would go, too. He built upon Romans — the whole creation in groaning and travail awaits redemption at the end of time. He actually pictured animals as transcending their predatory instincts, so when you go to heaven the lion loses its carnivorousness. I think of my biologist friends saying, gosh, just accept reality, don't make them into something they're not — and I think there's wisdom in that critique. But I also think there's wisdom in



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Wesley's hope. This creation does involve a kind of tragic dimension, and in some mysterious way we do hope for a deep peace that all living things enjoy."

Feminists, Buddhists and evangelicals

Along with process theology and the tradition-based approach of someone like Linzey, feminist and particularly eco-feminist thought has offered a framework that takes animals seriously. Theologians including Rosemary Ruether, Carter Heyward and Marjorie Procter-Smith have written on the topic, and Carol Adams — whose first book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, came out in 1990 — has made it her primary area of focus [see interview, p. 8]. Adams developed the concept of the "absent referent" to describe the animal whose needs, interests and individuality disappear in the production of meat.

Theological scholarship has trailed behind philosophy and animal activism, Adams says.

"You have Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* coming out in 1976, and Tom Regan's *Case for Animal Rights* in 1983, but it's not really till 1990, 1991 that people who were animal advocates deliberately tried to engage theologians and professors of religion. I think many people who are religious care very much about non-humans, and they want their understanding of their religious beliefs to correlate with that."

Adams says she has seen a lot of change in the past 12 years, "not just within religion and theology, but in terms of more young people raising issues about animals. The greatest rise in vegetarians right now is in the age group of 8 to 13. I think kids are naturally interested in vegetarianism and do not really want to hurt animals. Then, when they get into high school, they somehow discover a book like mine, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, and this concern about animals suddenly is given a different framework — a framework that not only explains why it's so legitimate, but shows

being so that the being is seen as an object rather than as a living, breathing, suffering being; fragmentation, or butchering, so that the being's existence as a complete being is destroyed one way or another; and then consumption — either literal consumption of the non-human animal or consumption of the fragmented woman through pornography, through prostitution, through rape, through battering. So I see a structure that creates entitlement to abuse because within the structure of the absent referent the states of objectification and fragmentation disappear and the consumed object is experienced without a past, without a history, without a biography, without individuality.

The Witness: Many people today, especially with the growth of the environmental movement, would say that we shouldn't mistreat the earth or non-human creatures — but they would see the food chain as a natural or divinely ordained thing, and would not see animals eating animals and humans eating non-human animals as mistreatment.

Carol Adams: I think we end up with two problems within religious circles. Meat-eating is both naturalized and spiritualized. This happened at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) where we did the first-ever panel on animals several years ago. What was so profound about the experience was that the arguments I heard from people there — the scholars — were the same arguments I hear when I'm on call-in radio stations here in Texas. When it comes to animals, the level of engagement and thought is pretty undeveloped.

So meat-eating is naturalized. There are two things we need to respond to here. One is that, supposedly, we humans get to eat animals because we're different from animals — and then suddenly the justification for eating these non-humans is that other non-humans do it. We become inconsistent.

Secondly — and I think this is part of patriarchal culture — we not only symbolically uphold carnivores in our culture, we uphold what are called the top carnivores, carnivores that actually eat other carnivores. Most meat-eaters eat herbivores. Humans are a good example — we eat cows, lambs, etc. Yet we uphold lions and eagles in a cultural mythology — carnivorous beings who are actually more carnivorous than we are. The fact is, less than 6 percent of animals actually are carnivorous. We just have such an overabundance of carnivorous examples around — nature shows celebrate the carnivore — that we have a skewed view of why other animals actually die. Most other animals do not die because they are eaten by carnivores.

Now there are some people — ecologists, environmentalists — who say, I want to use everything and I thank the animal for the sacrifice, etc. I feel that this has a tendency to use the sacrificial language that Christianity has sort of sanctified without ever saying, well, maybe it's our turn to sacrifice. Why all these years

is it only the non-humans who are to sacrifice themselves to the humans? Maybe it's time for the humans to sacrifice ourselves to the non-humans by not eating them. And secondly, how do we know that those animals wanted to be sacrificed — especially if that argument is coming from someone who is not a hunter? They use — in a sense they abuse — a native relationship with animals. Out of all the native ways of relating to non-humans, the only ones that are brought into the dominant culture are the ones that can be used to justify what we're already doing. There are lots of native cultures that didn't eat animals.

When we were at the AAR somebody stood up and said, it's a dog-eat-dog world. Well, my response is, no it isn't, dogs aren't eating dogs. Andrew Linzey, who really pioneered in this field, asked, didn't Jesus come to change that world? If we're Christians, why do we accept that it's a dog-eat-dog world in any of our relationships?

And if the naturalizing argument doesn't work, then the spiritualizing argument comes in: Well, we were given dominion, we are not like the other animals. But what is that dominion? The dominion in Gen. 1:26 is granted within a vegan world.

People spiritualize and they naturalize because they don't want to change — you could easily spiritualize and naturalize a whole different argument.

The Witness: You have advocated an ethic of care, rather than animal rights. How is this different?

Carol Adams: Well, my concern about animal rights language is that it arises within the same philosophical framework that gave us a differentiation between what was man/human and everyone else. The universal rights language is part of the notion of the Enlightenment man, who was an autonomous being separate from everyone else. In fact, no one is autonomous. We first learn in relationship. We learn to walk, we learn to talk in relationships. So the ethics of care critiques the notion of the autonomous man upon which the fundamental right is based.

But secondly, the language of animal rights came out of a need to prove that not only was it non-emotional, but it was manly. We're not getting upset about non-humans, it's not that it's upsetting — it's the right thing to do. And some of us have come along and said, it *is* upsetting. Being upset is a legitimate form of knowledge. Why can't we trust anger and other emotions that we feel when we hear about chickens being debeaked and veal calves being removed from their mothers in less than 24 hours? Why can't outrage and caring truly inform who we are as people?

People come back and say, you're saying women care more than men. No, we're saying that a male-identified form of

that it's connected to being concerned about the status of women, the status of people of color. This is what I hear from people all the time. They want to change the world and changing our relationship to non-humans is part of changing the world."

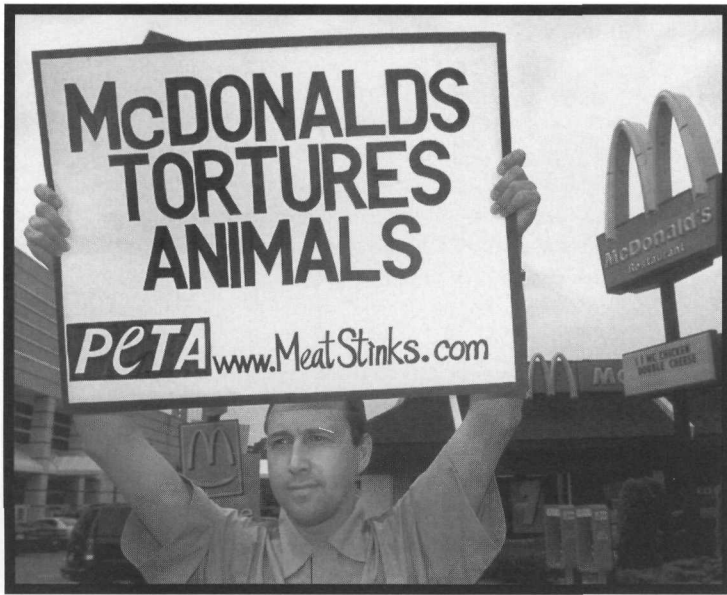
A recent book by Adams, *The Inner Art of Vegetarianism* (Lantern Books, 2000) is prefaced with a translation of a Sanskrit chant used at a yoga center: "May all beings be happy and free ... And may the thoughts and actions of my own life contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all." Adams wrote the book in an attempt to open dialogue between non-vegetarian spiritual practitioners and vegetarians without a spiritual practice, and her emphasis on Eastern spiritual practice (yoga and meditation) perhaps reflects another contemporary influence on Christian thinking about animals — namely, a growing interaction with Eastern tradition that held animals in higher regard.

As Mary Jo Meadow, a Christian teacher of insight meditation, writes in her 1994 book, *Gentling the Heart*:

"The first precept in Buddhist morality is not to kill any form of sentient life. This is not limited only to those animals we love to touch or pet. It also includes the kinds that crunch if we step on them, that whirl or buzz around our heads, and that instill fear in us. Practicing *metta* [loving-kindness] extends this non-harming attitude into one of positive well-being.

"At Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Mass., where I frequently do long meditation retreats, animals seem to sense the non-harming atmosphere. Birds regularly alight on people's outstretched hands, even when they are not holding food. ... Dogs flock to the place from miles around; meditators must be asked to ignore them, so that they will be willing to return to their proper homes."

The ranks of Christian theologians and writers who are examining the spiritual significance of animals and our ethical responsibility toward them continue to grow. Evangelical writer J.R. Hyland — who wrote *The Slaughter of Terrified Beasts* in 1988 — recently published *God's Covenant With Animals*. Stephen Webb, a religion professor at Wabash College and author of the book, *On God and Dogs*, wrote *Good Eating*, an examination of Christian vegetarianism from a traditional biblical perspective, and Baptist professor Richard Alan Young wrote *Is God a Vegetarian?* Unitarian minister Gary Kowalski, author of *The Souls of Animals*, has a new book titled *The Bible According to Noah*. A book called *The Lost Religion of Jesus* by Keith Akers — which suggests that the nonviolence, simple living and vegetarianism of early Jewish Christian communities may better reflect Jesus' teachings than the Pauline Christianity that won out in the canonical scriptures — has achieved significant popularity among animal advocates and is being taken seriously by theologians such as Walter Wink, who wrote the introduction. Although their approaches span the religious and philosophical spectrum and disagreements abound, all are grappling seriously with the human-animal relationship.



Rejecting 'might makes right'

For scholars and activists alike, the rubber often hits the road around questions of vegetarianism. Although not all would agree that meat-eating is inherently unethical, all would insist that it merits serious scrutiny, particularly in light of modern factory-farming practices.

"The vast majority of animals who live and die in the world are the animals who end up on people's dinner plates," Bruce Friedrich says. "Twenty-six billion animals per year, including sea animals, are eaten just in the U.S. — which is a daunting figure, since the human global population just passed six billion. So, for example, vivisection — which Gandhi called 'the blackest of black crimes that humanity is perpetrating' against other species — involves a fraction of that number, probably around 20 million animals. At the end of the day, I think that the taproot of humanitarianism, as Tolstoy said, is vegetarianism — because if, when we sit down to eat, we take the side of the strong against the side of the weak, and for no good reason at all we support violence and misery and suffering, I think it casts real doubt on all of our work for peace and justice in every other arena.

"I think of Jonah House and the Ploughshares movement, of which I remain a part, as working sort of top-down. It opposes the bomb, which is the epitome of an ecocidal culture. And then vegan advocacy works from the bottom up, recognizing that if people adopt compassionate diets — so that throughout the day you're making decisions against the moral paradigm of might makes right — that will cause a change in philosophical and religious understanding that would make the bomb impossible."

Friedrich recites the grim realities of modern factory farming. "As long as it's standard agricultural practice, anything goes," he says. "The animals have everything natural denied to them, they

thinking has triumphed over a female-identified form of responding and thinking.

The Witness: Part of your argument is that we're dissociated from the animal we're actually eating, we don't see the animal because we've made it into "meat." But there's another kind of argument that says that the real problem is that we have become separated from farming, for instance, and living close to the land; that we're separated from all of those natural realities, and if we feel bad when we think about it it's just some kind of sentimentalism because farmers or hunters don't feel bad. Some people in the men's movement have felt they ought to go out and kill a deer almost as a ritual.

Carol Adams: What's wrong with being sentimental? It goes back to the ethics of care. Perhaps sentiment is what we need. If there's something that makes you uneasy, perhaps the thing is not to conform your emotions to what culture is telling you, but to conform culture to what your emotions are telling you, which is that there might be something wrong here.

I grew up in a farming community. I watched butchering as a child. My sister was allowed to dip the dead pig into the boiling water and there was a sort of gothic fascination there. And I'd go home and eat meat — there was a complete disconnect. We were fascinated, but those animals were others, those animals were objectified beings. It is a violent process — and most animals are not butchered down on the farm, they are butchered in a horrendous way.

And I think that this "be-a-man" notion is exactly what, as Christians, we challenge. What's the shortest verse in the Bible? "Jesus wept." What did Jesus do in the Temple? What was happening in the Temple? Animals were being sold, for heaven's sakes. Jesus was angry about a lot of things, but perhaps one of them was that other beings were being sold there.

The Witness: How do you see vegetarianism as a spiritual path?

Carol Adams: For me, doing the least harm possible is a very spiritual path and a path with integrity. People think they're going to harm themselves by giving up meat — there's some protective nature there that keeps them from connecting the dots about the environment and human well-being and health. It would be helpful for people to feel like being on a spiritual path includes interacting with change, even at the most basic level of what we're going to eat. Spiritual life is a life of abundance, but when it comes to meat-eating people think they're going to experience scarcity. The most important thing vegans can do is simply live a life of abundance.

Animal voices

by Bruce Campbell

IN A SPATE OF RECENT MOVIES, through the miracle of computer animation, animals have been talking back — in fact, they've been loquacious to the point of distraction, as if we'd uncorked millenia of unspoken animus. This is not new to art and literature, of course, in which animals have routinely intervened in human affairs to re-route our passions, acting as guides to truth or tempters to ruin. But movies have seized on this with a remarkable frenzy. We may not be far from the VeggieTales version of Balaam's ass.

At the level of the box office, it's fun, but what's really going on? When horror and science-fiction films of the 1950s depicted Blobs and Things and other experiments run amok, this was critically understood as an expression of our cultural neurosis about our growing dependence upon technology along with fear of our nuclear capabilities. The rise and fall of Westerns synchronized with the waxing and waning of our confidence in our ability to act as a global sheriff, rounding up the bad guys and suppressing primitive cultures. As this line of criticism goes, it's not that the writers meant it, or that audiences were conscious of it, but the popularity and timing tell us that something was going on.

Perhaps with these current films, we are sorting through whether animals are "trying to tell us something." We may have grown increasingly insecure with our beliefs about animals at just the point when we're trying to sort out when and whether fetuses are human, and how we will proceed with cloning and organ harvesting, and whether we'll transplant animals' body parts for our own. At the same time we focus more than ever before on meaning at the cellular level, the more the boundaries between us and the animal world have become flexible on the celluloid level.

We're in new territory, and we're desperate for answers. We've been comfortable with believing that humans were humans and animals were animals, but we're no longer comfortable with the distinction as we've framed it — in life or in film.

Bruce Campbell is a media review editor for The Witness.

have their bodies mutilated, they're pumped full of hormones and antibiotics. Chickens grow six to seven times as quickly as they did just 40 years ago — by the time they're slaughtered, in under two months, they can't even move comfortably anymore. I was just out in California looking at massive, feedlot-style dairy farms. These animals' udders are massive, they're just complete Frankenstein-animals. They're in chronic pain for their entire lives. Cows 30 or 40 years ago were walking around six or seven kilometers a day. Dairy cows these days basically just lie there on their massive udders waiting to be relieved of their agony. They're impregnated every year, their babies are stolen away from them within a couple days of birth — and in every single instance the animals scream out in fear and frustration just like a human mother would. I don't think anybody with a conscience should be supporting these sorts of relationships."

'The fear and dread of you will be upon them.'

Stephen Kaufman, an Ohio physician who is medical director of the Christian Vegetarian Association (www.christianveg.com), believes that many people simply haven't thought about food as a religious issue.

"Educating people about the facts of factory farming goes a long way toward helping them make choices about their diet that are consistent with their fundamental ethical principles," he says. "It's never made sense to me to see the species barrier as an appropriate place to define where compassion stops — and actually most people agree with me. Ninety-nine percent of people would say we shouldn't be cruel to animals. Most would assert that humans are much more important than animals — but such a perspective is not incompatible with what we're talking about. We don't maintain that the act of eating animals is inherently sinful or wrong, and we recognize that there are people who need to eat animals in order to survive. But here in America just about everybody has a choice. If eating animals is harmful to aspects of God's creation, I think our faith really encourages us to consider whether this is what we ought to be doing."

Friedrich sees parallels between the church's unquestioning support of meat-eating and its failure to question other injustices.

"I look at past social-justice movements and the unfortunate use of the Bible to entrench the wrong side in many instances, and I think we can see that happening with animals in some of the debates that continue to go on," he says. "If you look back to the debates in Congress as to whether slavery should have been abolished, the biblical citation that comes up is Genesis 9, where the Canaanites are sent into slavery — and that's cited as God's blessing of this human relationship. Interestingly, Genesis 9 is also what's cited as God's blessing on humans eating meat. If you look at the passage, it's very far removed from anything that we should be excited about identifying with."

Kaufman agrees. "The price paid according to the story is a very profound one — that 'the fear and dread of you will be upon them.' We pay a heavy price for our taste for flesh, because we're no longer in communion with the other animals of God's creation. Will the sort of reconciliation that Isaiah prophesied happen? I don't know. But it's a vision that I find meaningful, so I try to make my life a part of that vision. The thing that I emphasize when I'm talking to people is, what is the compassionate world that we're hoping to live in? Even if we can't have that, isn't it something to seek and work toward?"

Many Christian activists — like Ryan Courtade, who organized Compassionfest — are doing just that. Courtade, who became a vegetarian after seeing a pig being slaughtered while on a sixth-grade school field trip in Spain, has convened an extensive Internet community of animal advocates (www.loveallanimals.com).

"We have 50,000 members across the country — students, mostly," Courtade says. "Members receive action alerts — sometimes they send letters or petitions out in their own communities, or response letters to newspaper articles, or letters to government officials. Currently we have about 30 volunteers who run different campaigns for animal rights and compile the action alerts, petitions and letters."

Courtade is an active member of his parish, helping with a children's afterschool program, serving as an acolyte, and taking part in the Episcopal Youth Council. He feels supported by his church in his animal advocacy, he says.

"People in my church are always interested. I always get questions about the newest project that I'm working on, or the latest update on an event. I've never had anyone at church ridicule me for what I do. There's a lot of encouragement."

Courtade takes for granted the link between his faith and his activism: "When you have faith in God, you need to show compassion to every living thing." ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness.

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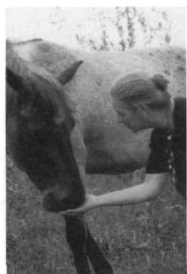
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HOLDING A WORLD



An interview with Linda Hogan

by Camille Colatosti

LINDA HOGAN is an award-winning Chickasaw poet and novelist. Her works include *Red Clay*, *Eclipse*, *Seeing Through the Sun*, *Mean Spirit*, *The Book of Medicines*, *Solar Storms*, *Power*, *Sightings: The Mysterious Migration of the Gray Whale*, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir*, and *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*. She is also co-editor, along with Brenda Peterson and Deena Metzger, of *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*. Fulcrum Press will publish her forthcoming book, *Horses Running*, under the label of the Museum of American Indians.

Her writings explore the connection between humans and animals, as well as the relationships among all of the earth's creatures. As she explains in her preface to *Dwellings*, "As an Indian woman I question our responsibilities to the caretaking of the future and to the other species who share our journeys. These writings have grown out of those questions, out of wondering what makes us human, out of a lifelong love for the living world and all its inhabitants. They have grown, too, out of my native understanding that there is a terrestrial intelligence that lies beyond our human knowing and grasping."

Today Hogan, retired from teaching creative writing at the University of Colorado, lives in a small rural town, southwest of Denver. Her grandchildren are frequent visitors to her home, where she lives with two horses, a dog and a cat. There are also wild visitors: tree foxes, night owls, coyotes and at least one mountain lion.

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: How did you become interested in the traditional relationship between indigenous peoples and animals? What is significant about this relationship?

LINDA HOGAN: When I think about the relationship between people and animals, the thing that I have always understood is that we are not only in relationship in an ecosystem but are as humble as the animals in our own rightful place. This is the difference between other religions and indigenous tradition. For Indians, if you are a seal hunter, you pray while you make your tools; you sing to the seal and you pray to the seal. You tell it why you are taking its life. If you are going to kill it, you respect it.

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: Did your background as a member of the Chickasaw Nation influence your relationship with animals?

LINDA HOGAN: My mother is of Germanic background and my father was Chickasaw. He was always good to animals but he was not traditional. My grandmother was kind and had a special relationship with animals. I remember that a large land tortoise was heading out and my grandmother stopped it and told the turtle not to go the way it was traveling because there were dogs there. The turtle turned around.

I have always had an empathic relationship with animals that can't be explained. I see this with horses. I live with two horses and am doing horse therapy with another named Thirsty. I have a brain injury and working with a horse is therapeutic for balance. Thirsty and I are an

IN BALANCE



Common people, like squirrel and sparrow

by Linda Hogan

IT IS A WARM AUTUMN DAY and we are driving east to release a golden eagle. We drive out past the farmlands with gold stalks of last year's corn bristling up from the flat fields, past hills showing the signs of a recent snow; moisture, a scattering of white. The front range of mountains is soft in the west behind us, the fields furrowed and lined where the mowers have been.

The eagle is quiet in a carrier in the back of the car. We drive with it past old, worn-looking houses, over railroad tracks, past trees twisted by years of shaping wind. We travel past a marsh of old, rattling cattails, and blue sky laying itself down on a snaking irrigation canal. There are rows of hay and grain silos. Antlers of deer and elk are nailed on the barns as if to say they are worshiped. And beneath all this is the black, rich earth.

As we reach the place where the eagle came from something inside the car changes; something strong and different is in the air. We stop talking, as if to listen. As soon as I feel it, Sigrid, the caretaker of injured raptors, feels it, too. She says of the eagle, "He knows he's home."

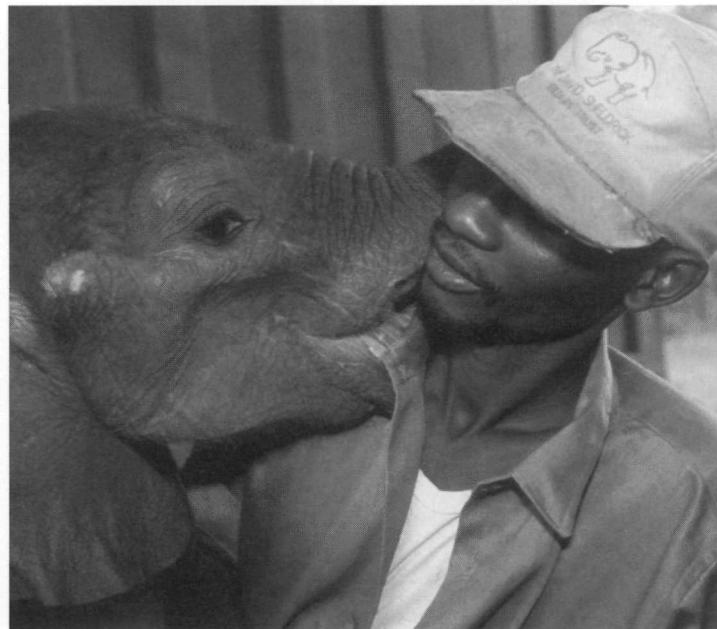
This feeling is a language larger than human, conveyed to us by the eagle we are transporting, the eagle we have held in our hands. Wordless, it seems to be a language spoken from and to the body. It enters skin, stomach, and heart. Feeling it, I can't help but think of the limits of our human language, what we can't speak, what we have no words for. It is clear there is a vocabulary of senses, a grammar beyond that of human making.

The eagle is still. He is waiting, listening. Looking back at him, I see what I can only call a look of wonder on his face, his beak slightly open, his eyes alert. The excitement and tension is strong and palpable, as if it had long been beyond the eagle's belief that he would ever return to this place. The changed climate in the car is so powerful that I am anxious; I want to pull over right away and let him go, but we drive farther, checking every small detail of the terrain, the currents of air, to make certain the tawny dark-eyed eagle will have the best chance for flight and survival. He needs a hill to rise from, a wide-trunked tree in the distance where he can sit in a branch and groom while he looks over the land and sky and decides what he will do. From past experience with birds, we know this; we have watched them do this many times before, an eagle, hawk, or owl sitting, taking in the world's terrain, even the parts of it we, with our limited human vision, can't see. He will look at the land and remember it, remembering the alive currents of air as they sweep the grasses as surely as we remember the contours of our own homelands.

Finally, finding the right place, we pull over and take him out of the

empathic pair. I think something and he will do it. I look at the barrel and say, "Okay, now let's go around the barrel," and Thirsty does this.

The Western mind has the idea that there is dominion over animals. If you see animals in a zoo, you do not see an animal, you see a creature of loss that has been created by humans, a marginal creature. All its significance has been taken away. The animal is without his environment. It has no den, no place where it catches food; it has nothing. Animals lose their very selves. Animals live very complex lives and have their own significant intelligence in their true environment. The Western mind does not see that.



Surrogate mother, Mishak Nzimbi with 1-month-old elephant.

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: What are some of the themes that stand out in indigenous stories about the human-animal relationship?

LINDA HOGAN: There are a lot of different themes. There is the story that so many tell of the time when humans and animals could change into each other. There were times when animals and people spoke the same language, or when the animals helped the humans. For instance, our mythology says it was the spider who brought us fire.

I've thought about these human-animal relationships for years — is this true? Well, humans and animals existed together for many thousands of years without creating the loss of species. There was enormous respect given to animals. I have to trust the knowledge of indigenous people because it held a world in balance.

I have a special interest in ceremonies. I look at a ceremony

called The Deer Dance. In the ceremony, I watch the entire world unfold through the life of the deer and a man dressed as a deer. The man dances all night. It is as if he were transformed into a deer. This is a renewal ceremony for the people. The deer that lives in the mountains far from the people provides them with life.

The purpose of most ceremonies — such as healing ceremonies — is to return one person or group of people to themselves, to place the human in proper relationship with the rest of the world. I thought that we were out of touch with ourselves 20 years ago. Now, with computers and email and cell phones, we are even more out of touch. How many of us even stay in touch with our own bodies? If we aren't inhabiting our own bodies, how can we understand animal bodies of the world?

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: How did you come to convene a meeting of tribal elders on endangered species concerns?

LINDA HOGAN: Because animals play such a central part in ceremonies and the history of tribes, I decided to invite a group of elders to get together to talk about animals.

One elder told us that in her tradition, the same word means power, energy, animal and God.

One of the most traditional, a man in his 80s named Howard Luke, who is an Alaskan Athabaskan, said that we do not live in a human-centered world. Animals are watching us and know what we are doing.

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: How do you address these ideas in your writing?

LINDA HOGAN: In my novel *Power*, there is a whole section where the main character is sitting in a boat and hearing what other people, including the panther people, are thinking. The panther talks about how the humans used to be beautiful people and what humans have now lost.

I just finished writing a book on American Indian horses, *Horses Running*. I have a wild horse and I think she is an American Indian horse. The Chickasaw had our own breed of horses. Chickasaw horses were short and stocky, and had necks that were so short that they had to get down on one knee to eat grass.

For years, our Chickasaw ponies were the most admired, and they were in high demand. But along the Trail of Tears were thieves, and the horses were stolen and eventually mixed with other breeds until they were gone. The Chickasaw didn't even make it to where we were supposed to go on the Trail of Tears. We stopped in Choctaw land, because we were all sick and exhausted.

My grandfather once found a horse that he thought was a Chickasaw horse, and he would not allow anyone else to ride it. The horse knew this. When my father was a boy, he tried to ride the horse and he got in trouble. The horse tried to throw him, run him into branches, and so on, until my grandpa went out and stopped them.

carrier. With grief and joy mixed together in our hearts, we say good-bye and set him free, placing him on the ground. He looks around for only a moment and then, in a muscular rise, his long wings open, strong and wide, he pulls upward. This bird doesn't stop in a tree to wait and watch. He flies, the light on him gold and brown. His dark eyes watch us. He circles back one last time the way so many birds do, as if to say good-bye. And then he travels away until he is only a spot in the sky and soon he disappears altogether from our sight, although with his keener vision, we know that he still sees us where we stand on the autumn earth wondering, as I will always wonder, what was communicated by the bird to us, how it was spoken, how taken in.

This is how many stories begin: Long ago, when animals and human beings were the same kind of people, they understood each other. When the world was young, the animals, people, and birds lived together peacefully and in friendship. In these early days of the world, in some locations, animals and humans were equals and, it was said, they spoke a common language, across species bounds. Perhaps they spoke in the way the eagle's language was communicated to two women on that day of its return home.

MAGIC WORDS (ESKIMO)

In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.

Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.

That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.

A word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen could happen —
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody could explain this:
That's the way it was.

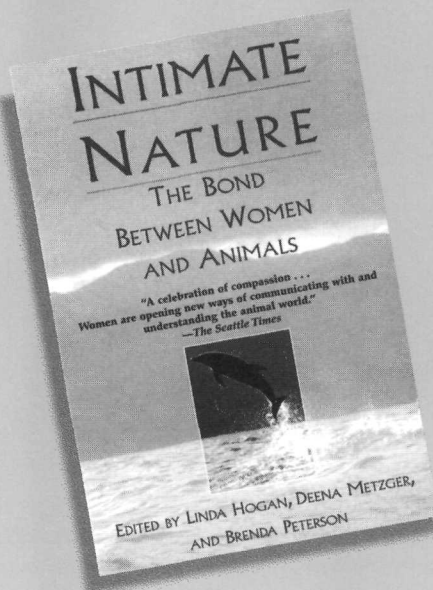
LAST YEAR A GROUP OF TRIBAL ELDERS and thinkers came together to talk about our relationship with the animals. Alex White Plume, a Lakota man who was one of the originators of the buffalo restoration programs on tribal lands, said that as the buffalo were returning so were the native grasses, insects and birds. The people, too, returned to the traditions, stories, and the language, which itself reflects ecological relation-

ships not contained by English. When taking back tradition, Alex said that the people looked again for their human place in the world. As we brought the animals back, he said, "We found that we, too, are just common people, like the squirrel and sparrow."

At the same gathering, Sarah James, a Gwich'in woman from interior Alaska, and the spokesperson for the caribou, said, "It was given to us by the creator to take care of the Earth. Every time we speak, we speak for tree, water, fish. We are trying to save the Caribou. I learn oil and gas rule the world, but we're not going to compromise to save the Caribou; they are the reason we are here today. We put ourselves in a humble position, no greater than bird or duck or plant. We're as humble as they are. I look at the mountain as if my life depends on it — for food, medicine — not just to see how beautiful it is. The animals can't speak for themselves, so we speak for them."

To be common people, humble people, how freeing that is. How much it offers us, placing us back in the participatory relationship with the world. It offers us the animal underpinnings of our own minds and bodies, and it is those we must rely on to bring us back to our humanity and compassion, to restore ourselves to our place.

— From *Intimate Nature* by Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson, copyright © 1998 by Brenda Peterson, Deena Metzger and Linda Hogan (Introduction and Compilation). Used by permission of Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc.



CAMILLE COLATOSTI: In your essay in *Intimate Nature*, you suggest that the stories of indigenous people and the wisdom the stories hold were suppressed by conquering peoples, but you also suggest that contemporary science is leading us back to the kind of knowledge that was suppressed. What do you mean?

LINDA HOGAN: I participate in Native Science Dialogues. There was one at the Navajo Community College in May. Native thinkers and traditionalists come together to talk with Western scientists about the significance of indigenous knowledge. Science is now catching up with what we know. Our elders have held and passed on enormous and elaborate understandings of the world, ecosystems and scientific philosophies.

A small example: a Comanche Indian woman says to an anthropologist, "I can look out there at that field and see seven different kinds of medicine and all you see are weeds."

CAMILLE COLATOSTI: You also write about your involvement with rehabilitating raptors. Why did you take on this work?

LINDA HOGAN: I started working in a wildlife rehabilitation center in Minnesota. I had moved to Minnesota and it was a very unhappy time in my life. I had an impossible job. I didn't realize the depth of racism there and my contact with nature was minimized.

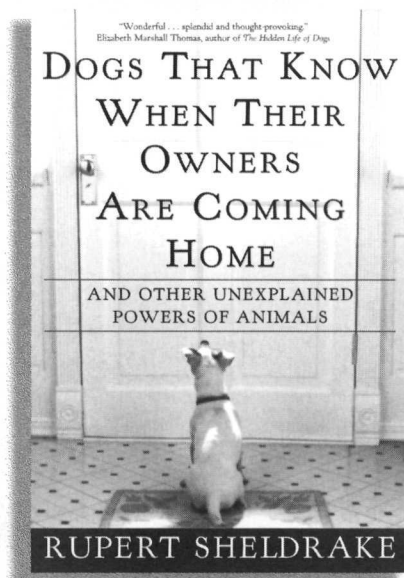
I started working in the wildlife center because it was the only sane thing in a crazy world. Going there was like being back in touch with the world again. Then I came back to Colorado and I found Sigrid, a caretaker of injured raptors. We became friends. I began working with her. At first, she had a backyard operation. Then, it grew into a model facility with two intensive care buildings. Later, I even helped work at bingo games to get money for the medication that the birds needed. That became my life—to make sure that the birds were well taken care of.

I did physical labor, at times even giving the birds showers — those who liked it, that is. Even the owls loved getting the showers. I would clean and sometimes we would cut deer meat and there wouldn't be a thought about it because we were doing it for the birds. We would cut up mice and wouldn't think about it and after a while mice meat even started to look kind of tasty.

One day, a bird came to Sigrid and made a lot of noise and wouldn't stop. So she followed this hawk to another who was caught in a fence. It took a lot of intelligence for the hawk to know to come to us. The hawk knew what Sigrid did there. It returned often to sit on the flight cage with its companion.

Working with the birds was central to my life and was my identity for a time. In an interview I was once asked what I was most proud of. They expected me to say the title of a book, but I said, "Working with birds." I love my writing but it is not the same as saving lives, not the same as being in the world every day. But in my writing, I try to make a feel for that natural world, to use words to make wholeness out of what's been broken.

Camille Colatosti is Witness staff writer.



by Marianne Arbogast

I once cared for my parents' dog, Buster, while they took a two-week vacation. Each evening when I returned from work, Buster would head outdoors for a brief run, then come back to follow me around the house or persuade me to take him for a walk. On the night they were due home, however, he planted himself on the grass in the front yard and watched the road, facing the direction from which they would return.

To many people, stories like this may seem curious but inconsequential. To Rupert Sheldrake, author of *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home*, they offer threads which, when tugged, have the potential to unravel an entire worldview which fetters modern science.

"The mechanistic theory of life, still the dominant orthodoxy, asserts that living organisms are nothing but complex genetically programmed machines," writes Sheldrake, an English biochemist. "They are supposed to be inanimate, literally soulless."

As a child, Sheldrake enjoyed relationships with pets and was fascinated by homing pigeons. But as a student, he experienced a dissonance between his personal experience and scientific methodology.

"As a general rule, the first step we took when studying living organisms was to kill them or cut them up," he found. Working a student job with a pharmaceutical company,

Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home

And Other Unexplained Powers of Animals

by Rupert Sheldrake, (Three Rivers Press, New York, 1999)

he observed "rooms full of rats, guinea pigs, mice and other animals waiting to be experimented on. At the end of each day dozens of animals that had survived various tests were gassed and thrown into a bin for incineration. A love of animals had led me to study biology, and this was where it had taken me."

His desire to understand what had gone wrong led Sheldrake on a quest that included studying the history of science and philosophy on a Harvard fellowship; earning a doctorate on plant development at Cambridge; joining the Epiphany Philosophers — an eclectic group of students, scholars and monks who gathered at an Anglican monastery for four weeks each year to explore holistic science and religion; and working in India to improve crops for subsistence farmers. While in India, Sheldrake — who had been studying Hinduism and Sufism — was drawn back to his Christian root tradition through the influence of Bede Griffiths, an English Benedictine with an ashram in southern India.

Sheldrake is best known for his theory of "morphic resonance," which he defines as "an influence of like upon like across time and space." He believes, for example, that "if rats in Sheffield learn a new trick, rats all around the world should be able to learn it quicker just because the rats have learned it there" (*Natural Grace*, Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake, Doubleday, 1997). "Morphic fields" are the connections through which this occurs.

"There are many kinds of social bonds within species, like those between a mother cat and her kittens, a bee and the other members of the hive, a starling in a flock, a wolf and its pack, and a great variety of human social bonds," he writes in *Dogs That Know*. "Then there are social bonds between species, like those between pets and their owners. ... I

propose that these bonds are not just metaphorical but real, literal connections. They continue to link individuals together even when they are separated beyond the range of sensory communication."

Sheldrake's book is filled with stories of cats that disappear when a trip to the vet is in the offing, dogs that howl when human companions die far from home, parrots that regularly anticipate a family member's return from work. Controlled experiments have convinced Sheldrake that such behavior is not easily explained away, by acute animal hearing, for example, or a regular pattern to human schedules. The fact that it is generally ignored by scientists is due, he believes, to two taboos: the taboo against taking pets seriously (which he attributes to "the split attitudes toward animals" in a society that depends on animal exploitation), and the taboo against taking psychic or "paranormal" experiences seriously.

"I believe there is much to be gained by ignoring these taboos," Sheldrake writes. "I also believe there is much to be gained by following a scientific approach. ... The path of investigation is more in the spirit of science than the path of denial. And it is certainly more fun."

There are "big issues at stake," Sheldrake believes. "There is no doubt that we have much to learn from our dogs, cats, horses, parrots, pigeons and other domesticated animals. They have much to teach us about social bonds and animal perceptiveness, and much to teach us about ourselves. ... We are on the threshold of a new understanding of the nature of the mind."

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness. Rupert Sheldrake's work can be found at his website, <www.sheldrake.org>.

HORSES, HEALING



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Beginning a therapeutic riding center

by Carter Heyward

“**T**HANK YOU for giving me my daughter.” This epigraph by a woman to a horse named Woody was in response to the pivotal role Woody had played in helping her autistic daughter begin to speak for the first time.

My companions and I heard about Woody in May 2000 when we visited “Flying Changes,” a therapeutic horseback-riding center in Topsham, Me., founded about 10 years ago by Barbara Goudy, a creative lover of horses and humans. Barbara told us that Woody, who had died only a few weeks before our visit at the ripe old horse-age of 35, had been a cast-away horse in 1993. She had been drawn to him as he stood in the corner of a dark stall at a horse auction, where his most likely future would have been to become a tasty item on a European menu. Instead, Woody went home with Barbara Goudy and went on to become the “Therapy Horse of the Year” for the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). Again and again, during his seven years as a therapy horse, Woody played an instrumental role in bringing autistic children to speech. Upon his death, thank-you notes and prayers of gratitude poured in from all over southeast Maine and from elsewhere in the nation.

The Woody story, and conversations with Barbara Goudy and others who have initiated or participated in therapeutic horseback-riding programs in the last couple of decades, persuaded me that I share this vocational pull. And so in the summer of 2000, with a hearty team of friends and colleagues, Maureen McManus, an acupuncturist and body worker in Brevard, N.C., and I began to lay foundations for a program in therapeutic horseback-riding and education in the mountains of western North Carolina.

In September 2000 we named this program “Free Rein.” A few weeks later, Free Rein’s Board of Directors met for the first time and hired as our Executive Director a woman, Carolyn Bane, whose experiences both as an equestrian and in working with special-needs children made her a promising choice for this position. In October Free Rein was incorporated by the state of North Carolina and, in March 2001, we heard from the IRS that we were officially a tax-exempt non-profit organization, which

meant that we could begin to raise money. This, of course, is a challenge we share with a gazillion other “nonprofits” in these times in which we’re all competing for relatively tiny portions of the huge charitable pie.

The pastoral is the political

How did this begin for me, this interest in therapeutic horseback-riding that I seem to share not only with other white middle-class crones (women “of an age,” or fast approaching) but also former president Reagan’s family and probably many other folks I have never been in the same political or theological room with, and until now would have had a hard time carrying on a conversation with, unless it were about horses and healing in very limited ways?

It began for me long before I ever thought about being a priest, theologian, seminary teacher or writer. As far back as I can remember, like many girls of my social location and many others as well, I’ve been fascinated by horses; and just as far back, I’ve known to my bones that the (pastoral) work of healing and the (political) work of liberation are closely and inextricably connected. For me, making these connections is the heart and soul of both feminism and Christian faith, which is why I am both feminist and Christian and will be as long as I live. Feminism and Christianity, which are mutually interactive, always call us more fully into ministry among the cast-offs, humans and other creatures alike.

For this reason I do not regard the therapeutic horseback-riding movement as non-political, much less a reactionary turning away from the realms of justice-making and the struggles against oppression. Of course it can be used in this way, as can any ministry of healing. Perhaps many of its proponents would choose to view it this way, as they might any other charitable work. But how much more challenging and exciting to assume that working with individuals with physical and mental disabilities, and with communities of people who are “at risk” in society, is necessarily political work! By people at risk, I mean kids of color, I mean poor kids, I mean teenagers in trouble with the law, kids

The horse is the priest

ONCE I HAD DECIDED to initiate a therapeutic riding program, I began talking with everyone I could about how to do it. In May 2000, shortly after meeting Barbara Goudy at “Flying Changes,” I happened to be at a seminary conference and was having breakfast with Larnie Otis, a former student at Episcopal Divinity School who is currently a priest in Maine. As we were catching up, I mentioned to Larnie my emerging interest in therapeutic riding. She put down her fork, shook her head as if in astonishment, and turned to me, excitement in her voice. She said that, prior to seminary, she herself had been deeply involved in therapeutic horseback-riding and I’ll never forget the words that came out of Larnie’s mouth: “If you move in this direction, Carter, you’ll discover that the horse is the priest.” At this point, her eyes teared up, and we two priests sat in silence, both a little stunned by the impact of this claim. More than a year later and still early in the operations of “Free Rein,” our therapeutic horseback-riding center in North Carolina, I am just beginning to take in some the meanings of these words — the horse is the priest.

First of all, even from a rather traditional Christian perspective, to assert that the horse is priest is not simply to lift up a poetic image, nor is it hyperbole. It is theology, good theology, the kind rooted in a living spirituality. If God is the creative wellspring of all that lives and breathes and loves, and if God meets us through those who offer us occasions to drink from this healing spring, then surely it is this same holy spirit that a horse offers to the child or adult who comes, seeking strength. The priest in catholic tradition is, after all, fashioned theologically as a mediator, one who stands at the altar for both God and humanity, in some way representing each to the other. This is what the horse is doing at the altar of the therapeutic arena — bringing together the human rider and her/his restorative, healing power; helping open the rider to this sacred energy and, we can faithfully presume, helping open God to the embodied yearnings and needs of a particular human (and horse?).

From this very catholic perspective, therapeutic horseback-riding, like the eucharist, can be an occasion of thanksgiving, in which humans and our divine life are united through our human participation in the holiest of “sacrifices” — God’s giving up of divine control in order to be there with, and for, those in need. Giving its body over to the human need for strength and health, the horse represents God in this transaction. The horse also represents our human moral capacity to give ourselves over to empowering one another and other creatures to go together (walking, trotting, cantering, if you will) in right, more fully mutual, relationship, in which we move together, more nearly as one, a people united.

At the same time, the human rider, empowered through the horse — like all who partake of the holy eucharist — represents all humans and other creatures who need to draw our strength, our sacred power, from struggling for right, justice-making, compassionate connectedness with one another. This right relation is forged through our willingness, following Jesus, to give up our spiritually ignorant claims to autonomy and independence in order to be there for one another in an authentically holy communion. The building of such community — like the creative relational connectedness between horse and rider and those who accompany them — always generates sacred space in which miracles can happen.

That’s a fairly traditional Christian interpretation of the horse’s role as priest. But it pushes well beyond catholic interpretation in one way and protestant in another. And both

and adults struggling to recover from addictions of various sorts, battered women and children, women and men who are mentally ill, senior citizens who are depressed because they feel expendable and invisible, and many others.

Therapeutic horseback-riding is one of a million charitable undertakings that can be, and should be, subversive in its lessons and liberative in its healings not only of individuals but also communities. In good faith, our healing work — as instructors, board members, volunteers, indeed as pastors in the broadest sense, regardless of what if any religious affiliations — cannot stop with a child’s learning to speak, as exhilarating as this is for the child, her family and friends, her teacher, and perhaps (who knows?) the horse whose energy has touched her. It’s wonderful that we focus intently upon the individual horse and rider while they are working in the arena. It’s wonderful — and the healing process doesn’t stop here, because every individual is part of a larger whole, a community, a society that is also in need of healing.

Toward a just, creature-loving world

We are called to pay attention to the social and personal dimensions of healing and liberation. Folks involved in therapeutic horseback-riding are in a good position to do so. There are, after all, hundreds of therapeutic riding centers in the U.S. and Europe, where it originated as a movement in the middle of the 20th century. Therapeutic horseback-riding is fast becoming a respected form of community work and a favorite recipient of charitable donations because it is often such an effective resource of empowerment for disabled and cast-away children and adults. As workers in this context, we can be effective community organizers, and this is what we need to be doing.

We need to be attentive to how “our people” and “our horses” — socially marginalized people and creatures — are regarded and treated at local, state, and national levels of our life together. We share not only a vocation to helping horses help people — and helping people help horses — but also to helping our government help people rather than casting aside those with pressing needs for food, education, health care, and basic respect, as well as those with special needs due to disabilities. This means that we work for social change wherever and however we can. And it means that, wherever possible, we work together — we in the therapeutic riding world as well as folks in other nonprofits and in those organizations and movements that are committed to the struggles for justice.

We encourage and delight in the children and adults who come to us. We also work against the racism which continues to disable our communities, regardless of our ethnic and cultural roots, and which plays no small part in shaping how individuals are able to handle their own and others' handicaps. We marvel as children on horseback squeal with delight. We also raise our voices against the sexual and gender injustices which invariably are playing some role in determining how people experience and express their needs. We groom and care for our horses. We also question why most horses, like most humans, in this and other societies are treated with contempt and valued primarily, even only, for the profit they generate. We love our horses, our students and clients, our work, our communities — and, because we do, we become rabble-rousers on behalf of a more fully just, deeply creature-loving community and world.

So then, back to Woody. Free Rein has just witnessed an autistic child's first speech — Sean spoke to “Max” the other day, and we are still reeling from the joy and astonishment of the kind of breakthrough that many who know autism say is “miraculous.” Working in a therapeutic riding program is working amidst the possibilities of miracles each day. It helps me ponder the Bible in fresh ways with eyes and mind wide open. But I'm also aware that, in the Bible as well as here today in places like Free Rein and Flying Changes, there is another kind of miracle that we Christians are called to expect — the miracle of local communities and state and national movements of people organized across culture and class not simply to feed the hungry, but to eliminate hunger; not simply to clothe the naked and shelter the homeless, but to eliminate poverty; not simply to administer to those with disabilities of many kinds, but to create a social order in which solidarity with disabled and marginalized people and creatures has become a way of life; not simply to care for horses and humans, but to struggle for a world in which horses, humans, and all creatures are treated with respect and invited to share in a common-wealth. These are the miracles we horse lovers, human lovers, Christians, feminists, and other justice workers are called to expect and, by God, to generate. ●

Carter Heyward is a professor of theology at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., and Chair of the Board of Directors of Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education in Brevard, N.C.

of these movements beyond much of our theological heritage are significant: The images offered above move beyond catholicism in the implicit assumption that the human rider as well as the horse can be priest. The autistic child, the teenager at risk, the addicted woman or man not only represents our human/creaturely need for one another's presence and solidarity. These riders also offer us experiences and images of the sacred power that touches and changes not only human life, but the rest of creation as well.

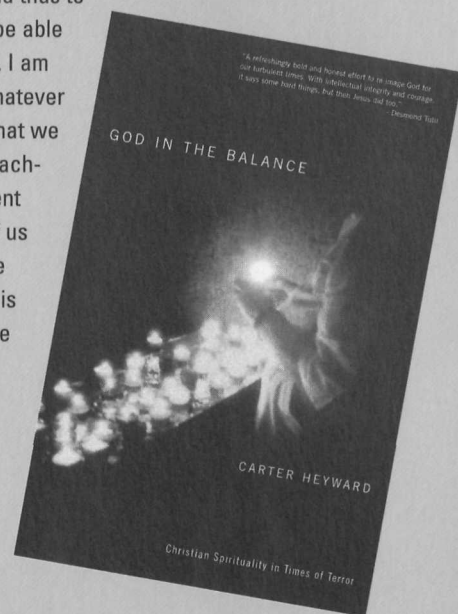
At its best, therapeutic horseback-riding is a mutual endeavor, in which the horse, as well as the rider, is affected — touched, empowered, often brought to new life. For many feminist Christians, this radical mutuality rings deeply true in the Jesus story as well, in which the brother from Nazareth is not the only agent of sacred, healing power. Rather, like the horse, Jesus receives healing energy even as he gives it. Indeed, his sacred power is “sacred” precisely because it is shared — a powerfully holy spirit because it belongs to no one, but rather to all.

In the Jesus story, in the Christian eucharist, and in therapeutic riding, God is not simply represented by Jesus, the ordained priest, or the horse. God is the power, the sacred healing energy, that is generated between and among all the characters in the drama — Jesus and the rest of people, the priest and the rest of the people, the horse and the rider and the rest of the creatures, human and others, with them. Larnie Otis was right: The horse is the priest; and so is the person with special needs who comes seeking healing and strength.

The implication of this theology that spins us way beyond protestantism is its profound affirmation of creatures-other-than-human as being as much in God, of God, and part of God's healing, liberating work as we humans can be. Is it a sacrilege or a sacramental revelation to affirm that the horse, like Jesus, is our priest? Does it move us outside the bounds of Christian faith, or can it deepen and radicalize our Christian witness, to claim that therapeutic horseback-riding is as filled with the presence and power of the living God as any place of Christian worship can be?

As a priest, I have no doubt that Christian worship and sacrament has for too long been not only patronizingly male-centered but also arrogantly human-centered. We have been unfaithful to the rest of God's creation, and thus to God. Realizing this in my soul, I am grateful to be able to turn to the horse and rider as my own priest. I am filled with awe in my yearning to be open to whatever God may be teaching us in new ways. Or is it that we are being called to something God has been teaching since before the worlds began — an ancient wisdom, a dimension of Sophia, which some of us late learners may be hearing and seeing for the first time? In the context of therapeutic riding, is my vocation now to become an acolyte to horse and rider?

— A version of this reflection is included in Carter Heyward's new book, *God in the Balance: Christian Spirituality in Times of Terror*, The Pilgrim Press, 2002.



INSEEING

The monks and dogs of New Skete

by Morgan Van Wyck

IT IS ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. Outside it is pitch dark and the ground still covered with snow. It is time once again to witness the miracle of birth. Father Marc, who will this night act as midwife, turns on the light in his cell. He has been roused by Kirka, the German shepherd who sleeps each night at the side of his bed. Making their way to the kennel complex with the aid of a flashlight, the expectant mother begins whining, restlessly churning up the nest prepared for her in the immaculate and roomy space. He stoops down to soothe her and it is clear that she accepts his presence. They have been through this before.

It will be hours before Father Marc is able to rest: Nothing in this place is left to chance. He will stay until all the puppies are born and cleaned of the afterbirth, and until he is certain that the new family is enjoying their first meal. Although they do not know it, these small German shepherd pups are extremely fortunate. Their caretakers for the next seven or eight weeks will be the monks of New Skete.

In the late sixties, 12 Eastern Orthodox monks purchased 500 rocky and forested acres on Two Top Mountain in upstate New York near the Vermont border. Having their own land, they felt, would better allow them to put their monastic beliefs into practice. Here, surrounded on all sides by the Catskills, Adirondacks and Green Mountains, they began to explore the possibility of breeding and training dogs as a way to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Since then, over a period of more than 30 years, the monks of New Skete have built an impressive reputation as dog breeders and handlers. They have authored two best-selling books on the subject and have just completed a three-part training video. People throughout North America visit them, bringing companion dogs exhibiting a wide variety of behavioral problems. Three weeks later, having passed through the monks' training program, the dogs will go home cooperative and happy companions.

Father Marc has been a member of New Skete since the beginning.

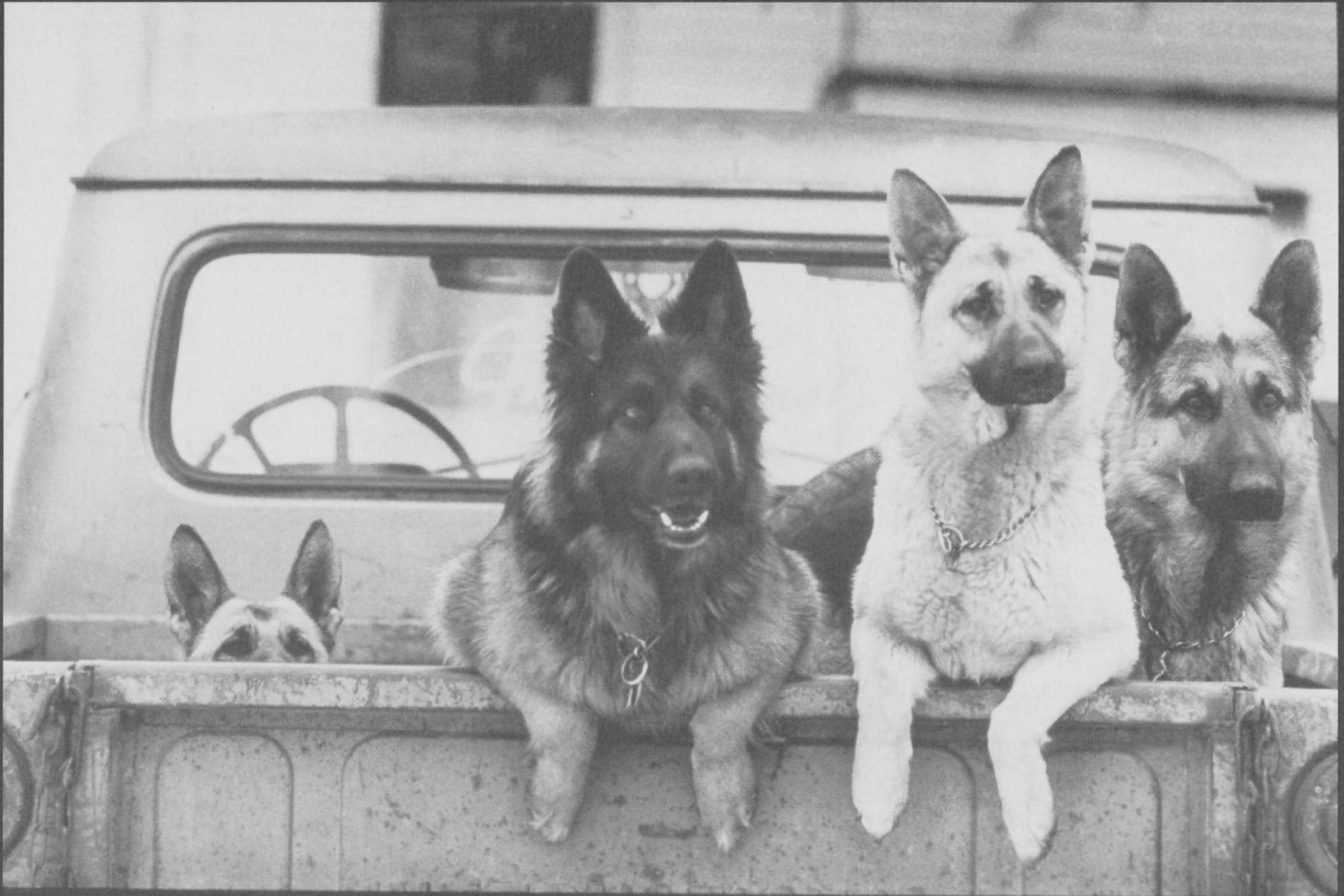
"When we first moved here," he explains, "we had a wonderful male German shepherd whom we called Kyr, which means Your Eminence. He was a large, beautiful, and wonderfully tempered dog. He had been born at the Institute for the Blind but they had been unable to use him in their program. He was pretty much a member of the community and we began to experience what a dog of this intelligence and background could do for an individual and for a community, as far as enhancing the quality of our social and emotional life here."

Before initiating the breeding and training programs the monks were helped in their understanding of the canine mind by another member of the community, Brother Thomas. He trained the German shepherds to live in the monastery as a group, and in a way which was appropriate for the environment. Every new monk who entered the community spent a period of apprenticeship with Brother Thomas.

In their first book, *How to Be Your Dog's Best Friend*, they explain: "More than merely instructing [us] in handling skills and techniques ... Brother Thomas tried to communicate an intuitive way of dealing with dogs. He emphasized 'listening' to the animal and 'reading' the dog's reactions. His training and handling skills were passed on in an oral tradition that is still alive at New Skete."

The monastic experience calls one to go beyond words and to live, as Brother Christopher puts it, "a life without division." It is an important point, since only in this way can one appreciate the extent to which, in the process of raising and training dogs, the monks have also enriched their own spiritual practice. Frequently, for example, the monks speak about the discipline of "inseeing," a term they borrowed from their readings of the German poet Rilke.

Father Laurence, the abbot of New Skete, regards inseeing as the true meeting place of the contemplative mind with the natural world: "Inseeing is being willing to look at another living thing in a way that allows for seeing it in and of itself. It is respecting this 'other' for what it is, without trying to change it or



"More than merely instructing [us] in handling skills and techniques ... Brother Thomas tried to communicate an intuitive way of dealing with dogs."

own it. In this struggle to deepen one's understanding one is enriched, given life, no matter how limited one's success in this endeavor."

It follows, therefore, that in the creation of their dog training and handling programs the monks would begin with respect for what the dog needed and would approach it in a uniquely holistic way. While most dog training regimes are strictly utilitarian, limited to the sit, down, stay, come and heel commands, the monks approach each dog, says Father Marc, "as a unique creature." And further, "Instead of seeing training as our main approach, training is just one element that fits into the larger element of socialization, one aspect of it. But we try to fill in other aspects too, which means the human-dog bond, the emotional bond, the working relationship, the dog and the human as fellow pack members."

The association of monastic figures with dogs has a rich history. The story of St. Francis of Assisi and the taming of the Wolf of Gubbio is probably the best known of all. In the case of St. Dominic, the dog became associated with spiritual enlightenment. The story is told that before St. Dominic's birth his mother dreamed she carried in her womb a black and white dog that would come forth, carrying a torch in its mouth and setting the world on fire.

In another story the Irish Brigit (453–523), asked to prepare a dish for a distinguished nobleman visiting her father's house, was given five choice pieces of bacon. A starving hound found its way to her kitchen and evidently suffering greatly from hunger, was given three of the pieces of bacon. Each piece fed to the dog was miraculously replaced. Then seen as blessed food, the dish was offered to the poor.

The monks at New Skete gained understanding of the dogs' needs from their research into wolves, believed by many to be the domesticated dog's nearest relative. Dogs, like wolves, are pack animals and as such do not tolerate being isolated for long periods of time. In the domesticated environment, humans become responsible for providing the physical and emotional closeness for-

merly provided by the pack. Additionally, both dogs and wolves are responsive to leadership; in fact, without it they become unruly and emotionally chaotic. Brother Christopher, who is primarily responsible for the training of outside dogs, explains:

"We really paid attention to what dogs are on a natural level through studying wolves and becoming more sensitive to what dog behavior really means. From that, we began to apply those lessons to our own situation of forming relationships with dogs and expanding on the pack concept.

"Inseeing is being
willing to look at another
living thing in a way that
allows for seeing it in
and of itself."

"We saw for ourselves that dogs are very conscious of social hierarchies, that they require leadership. Because this is a sort of laboratory — we currently live with 15 dogs here in the monastery itself — we had an experiential awareness of these principles. We were able to see how they worked in real life and how they not only enhanced our lives but how they enhanced the dogs' lives.

"To be fair to the dog, I have to enter into a relationship with the dog as dog. I have to listen to the dog, to what the dog's needs are. I have, for example, to assume the role of leadership that the dog requires for it to really achieve its potential, to really flower."

This is key to understanding the principles which inform every aspect of their handling and breeding programs. From the moment a new litter of pups is born, and in all their interactions with their own and others' dogs, the monks of New Skete work to bring the animal as close to its potential as possible.

From the first week of life, for example, New Skete pups are exposed to a moderate amount of physical handling. The monks say that this handling, although somewhat stressful, helps the dogs develop into adults

with superior problem-solving abilities and a greater degree of emotional balance than counterparts raised in the absence of such stimulation.

In one such exercise, Father Marc lifts a four-week-old puppy into the air on the end of outstretched hands. For two or three minutes the small rotundity may voice its protest, experiencing for the first time a sense of height, the chill of the air, and its own aloneness away from the familiar warmth and sounds of litter-mates and mom.

In addition to increasing the heart rate, the monks say this also "causes an involuntary hormonal reaction in the adrenal-pituitary system, a help in resisting disease and handling stress. The overall effect of this is to prime the entire system, building it up and making it more resilient to emotionally challenging experiences later on in life. When puppies receive consistent, non-traumatic handling, they become more outgoing and friendly and show less inclination to be fearful once they are older."

At the end of the exercise Father Marc gently lowers the pup to his chest, where he will hold it and speak in a reassuring tone of voice. Eventually the pup will approach the whole episode with a totally relaxed and nonchalant attitude. The repetition of a simple action, stressful but not overwhelmingly so, and followed by reassurance and affection, is one of many that will, over the weeks remaining before they go to new homes, lay the foundation of confidence, trust in humans, and emotional health.

Thomas Merton once wrote that a monastic community "challenges the modern mind." At New Skete this has taken on new meaning. In their search for answers to the question, "What does it mean to be human?" the monks at New Skete have been led into a lengthy, experiential enquiry into "What is dog?"

Morgan Van Wyck has a golden retriever named Deva who has been raised the New Skete way. This article is adapted from a longer version which first appeared in Shambhala Sun, 1585 Barrington St., Ste. 300, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 1Z8.

LOSING HEAVEN

by Irene Monroe

HEAVEN WAS THE FIRST OF MY PETS TO DIE. She was survived by her lifelong feline sibling and rival, Poochi; her feathered siblings: Eenie and Meenie — cohabitating finch lovers, Troilus — a 23-year-old dove, and Bird D — a parakeet rapper; and a host of her canine cronies. Unfortunately, Heaven did not live to meet her new canine sibling, Earth, a.k.a Midnight.

I found Heaven on a Sunday in the summer of 1982 while walking home from church. Noticing this cute 6-month-old Australian-shepherd-mix puppy outside of the bodega just a block away from my house, I thought she was the proprietor's new pet. When I went into the store to inform Hector that his puppy was running loose, he told me she was a stray that had been hanging around all week. Deciding on the spot that I would take her, I purchased a box of dog biscuits and wooed her home.

Heaven got her name not because she was by any means an angel. In truth, Heaven was quite hellish most of her life and she possessed both deva and devilish qualities. She got her name from the African-American hymn, "When We All Get to Heaven," which we had sung in church that Sunday, and which was still playing in my head as I walked home.

Heaven died at the age of 11 on July 16, 1993, at Angell Memorial Hospital, from inflammation of the lungs. Just 10 days before, Heaven and I had been swimming in Spy Pond without a worry in the world. She had spent eight days in the canine intensive care unit when the dreaded call came. Heaven's time was approaching, her veterinarian told me, so please hurry to the hospital to say goodbye. At four o'clock that morning I held Heaven in my arms, singing to her "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," as I watched her expel her last breath of life.

Early that morning, when I walked away from Angell Memorial Hospital without Heaven, I had no idea I would plummet into a state of deep despair. Her

death caught me completely unprepared for the range and intensity of emotions I would experience. The tightness in my throat and the heaviness in my chest lasted for months, because there was a gaping hole in my life: Her physical presence, our daily routine, and the social and emotional interaction I had become accustomed to were suddenly gone. As I grieved her death, I realized there were few resources to support bereaved pet owners. Too often we keep our pain hidden because we are embarrassed or afraid no one will understand.

However, I felt her absence warranted my grieving — publicly and privately — because Heaven had taught me many life lessons. The two that stand out

the most are the lesson about the preciousness of life and the lesson that love knows no species boundaries.

The Christian gospel is founded on the premise that love knows no boundaries, and animals are inseparable from that proclamation. Christian compassion mandates that we covenant with one another — humans with humans and humans with animals. In wanting to celebrate the covenantal relationship I had with Heaven, and by extension with other

pet owners and their animals, past and present, I performed a "Blessing of the Animals" worship service. On July 31 at Old Cambridge Baptist Church people brought their animals or pictures of their deceased ones to place on the altar. During a "Testimonial of Our Friends" in the service, I thanked Heaven for the generosity of her love and for the wonderful years of our life together.

Irene Monroe is a doctoral candidate at Harvard Divinity school. Her 'Queer Take' columns are a regular feature on <www.thewitness.org/agw>.



Liturgy of the cosmos

In an interview with Derek Jensen in *The Sun* (5/02), Thomas Berry suggests that “there is a cosmological order that might be called the ‘great liturgy,’ and that the human project is validated by ritual participation in this natural order. Our job, as humans, is to be a part of the great hymn of praise that is existence.

“We have lost touch with the cosmological order. The precise hour of the day is more important to us than the diurnal cycles. We’re so busy worrying — Will I get to work on time? Will I avoid rush-hour traffic? Will I get to watch my favorite television program? — that we have forgotten the spiritual impact of the daily moments of transition. The dawn is mystical, a moment to experience the wonder and depth of fulfillment found in the sacred. The same is true of nightfall, and of bedtime, when we pass from consciousness to sleep and our subconscious comes forward. Children, in particular, know that bedtime is magical. Their parents talk to them in a different way at this time: tender, sensitive, quiet.

“There are magical moments in the yearly cycle, too. One is the winter solstice, the turning point between a declining and an ascending sun. It’s a moment of death in nature, and a moment when everything is reborn. We have lost touch with this once intimate experience.

“Then, in the springtime, humans are meant to wonder at the new life and to ceremonially observe succession. This leads to the fulfillment of summer, and then to the harvest, another time of gratitude and celebration, but also the beginning of the movement toward death.”

Blue/green movement

A small but growing “blue/green” movement is bringing labor organizers and environmental activists together to challenge threats to economic and biological sustainability, Bryony Schwan of Women’s Voices for the Earth writes in *Resist* newsletter (4/02).



“One of the most important blue/green efforts of late has been the diverse coalition of labor and environmental organizations — including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Sierra Club, the United Steelworkers of America, District 11, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, the Just Transition Alliance and many others — who have been working to find a solution to global warming that protects workers and the economy.”

Schwan reports that in February of this year, “the coalition (whose unions represent more than three million workers) along with the Union of Concerned Scientists released a joint statement stating, ‘Global warming is a problem that needs to be solved. The science is clear on that point. The only question is whether we will approach the global warming problem in a way that protects workers and communities, or a way that further enriches large energy corporations.’

“More work lies ahead for these new blue/green efforts. Labor unions must educate

their rank and file about environmental issues, that environmentalists are not their enemies and that worker-friendly solutions can be found. Environmental groups must educate their members that supporting organized labor in their struggles and looking for environmental solutions that protect workers are critical to the success of their own campaigns.”

Healthcare for women prisoners in “dark ages”

As far as healthcare goes, women in prison “might as well be living in the dark ages,” Cynthia Cooper writes in *The Nation* (5/6/02). “In the area of reproductive and breast cancers, prisons fail in prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, continuity of care, alleviation of pain, rehabilitation, recovery — and concern.”

In 1999, Amnesty International documented “egregious violations of women’s medical care” in a report titled “Not Part of My Sentence,” and issued an alert in 2001 “questioning the unexplained death of nine women in the California system,” Cooper says.

"Effectively protected from public scrutiny, the barbed-wire medical system is uncoordinated, underfunded and has almost zero accountability. Doctors are ill-trained and overburdened, and even competent ones can be trumped by correctional personnel. 'It's like Alice going down into a rabbit hole,' says Bonnie Kerness, a lawyer who directs the American Friends Service Committee's Prison Watch project in New Jersey.

"A pattern of failures across the nation points to systemic pathology. 'Every single state will tell you women's healthcare is the top problem in women's prisons,' says Lucy Armendariz, a former ombudsman for women prisoners in California, now working as counsel to the state's legislature. The federal government refuses Medicaid payments for prisoners, placing the entire burden on states. 'And it's pretty much political suicide when you say, "Let's give more money for prisoners,"' explains Armendariz."

AIDS adds to African food crisis

The food crisis in Southern Africa is being exacerbated by the AIDS epidemic there, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported in June.

"As Southern Africa struggles with its worst food crisis in at least a decade — some 8 million people currently need emergency food aid — relief workers say AIDS has added greatly to the problem," Nicole Itano wrote (6/11/02). "The loss of laborers and resources to AIDS has pushed many families to the edge of survival.

"Everyone believed that this [AIDS] epidemic was [just] a health issue. It's only later that we realized that it impacted every single sector of development,' says Marcela Villarreal, chief of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) population and development service. 'Food security is obviously the highest issue on rural people's agendas because they have to eat ... every day. Because they are

impoverished and because they have HIV/AIDS, they are losing their ability to deal with this most basic of needs.'

"More than two-thirds of the population in the 25 most affected African countries live in rural areas. In Malawi, one of the region's poorest countries and one of the hardest hit by the current food crisis, some 80 percent of people make their living off the land. ...

"On the most basic level, AIDS steals the youngest and most able-bodied, denying communities their agricultural labor force. The FAO estimates that since 1985, at least 7 million agricultural workers have died in the 25 most affected African countries. By 2020, the organization says Malawi will have lost 14 percent of its agricultural workers, South Africa 20 percent, and Namibia 26 percent. ...

"Given that subsistence agriculture is by definition only at the subsistence level, the loss of a working adult has a major impact on agricultural production and often has broader implications for the community,' says Chris Desmond, a researcher at the Health, Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division at the University of Natal in South Africa. 'Also, with sickness, you often have extreme pressure on household resources. This can result in the sale of assets, which can often be the sale of very key assets that diminish the ability to produce.'"

Holy Land studies

A new academic journal devoted exclusively to the Holy Land — *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* — was launched by Continuum in July. Aimed at both an academic and wider public readership, the journal will focus on issues which have contemporary relevance and general public interest. Planned subjects include the Holy Land as a geographical and intercultural meeting-place, the Arab-Israeli conflict, religious and cultural pluralism, and interfaith dialogues.

Editor Michael Prior is the Chair of the Holy

Land Research Project of St. Mary's College (University of Surrey, UK). Prior is the author of *The Bible and Colonialism: a Moral Critique*, *Western Scholarship and the History of Palestine*, and *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry*. He was invited to be the first Visiting Professor of Theology at Bethlehem University, where he prepared the university's program in religious studies.

Associate Editor Nur Masalha, Director of the Holy Land Research Project, is a distinguished Palestinian academic whose most recent work is *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion, 1967–2000*.

The International Advisory Board includes Jews, Christians and Muslims, political scientists, historians, biblical scholars, Middle East specialists and theologians.

For more information or to subscribe, contact Michael Prior at priorm@smuc.ac.uk or Nur Masalha at masalhan@smuc.ac.uk. ●

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