

Fossil Fools or Subversive Fools?

Chris Walton asks a simple question

Sam Norton (p.4) reminds us to set as our first priority 'right worship'. It is a timely, but not new reminder. In the eighth century BC Micah proclaimed:

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

While we do not need the ecological crisis to prompt us, we are being prompted to ask what it is that the Lord does require of us as "the biggest threat of all time which has the potential to wipe us all off the face of the planet, and most of the other species, too" (Franny Armstrong, director of *The Age of Stupid*).

Plainly, the Lord does NOT require us to deliberately maintain a lifestyle which systematically destroys his creation.

The Genesis narrative of Creation reveals that responsibility for the care of all the work of God was given to humankind (Genesis 1. 26).

On the first three days of Creation the Spirit hovered over the chaos and light and dark (day and night), the seas and the land were formed (Genesis 1.3-10).

In the last two hundred years human activity on the earth has drastically altered the fragile balance between land, seas and atmosphere. A third of the world's landmass suffers from desertification; the atmosphere has the capacity to absorb only one third of the CO₂ that we produce each year (2005); more than 80% of ocean pollution is caused by human activities that take place on land (UNEP 2006).

Also on the third day of creation vegetation was formed (vs11-13).

Deforestation continues at the rate of 37.5 million acres per year and half the wetlands originally on the planet have been destroyed.

On the fourth day the sun, moon and stars were put in their place (vs. 14-19).

The use of fossil fuels (stored sunlight energy) has multiplied by 5 in the last 50 years, oil consumption has multiplied by 8.

On the fifth day was the creation of all sea creatures and the birds (vs 20-23).

Now, 30% of fish species are endangered; 11 out of the 15 major world fishing zones are in decline; more than 70% of marine fisheries are exploited to an extent where the ability to replenish their capacity is exceeded (UNEP 2004).

On the sixth day all animal species and also humankind were created.

Now 24% of all mammal species are endangered; 50,000 species (including plants, fish, birds and animals) become extinct every year.

On day seven God rested.

We have even found an alternative for this. Now we rush to the temples of consumerism.

Is this blatant act of de-creation what the Lord requires? Does the Lord require that we uphold the cycles of exploitation of every aspect of his good Creation as the foundation of our rampant worship of consumerism?

We can of course refuse to believe that this has anything to do with us, or insist on believing that anything we do will simply not make any difference. We can, in other words, simply continue to be FOSSIL FOOLS.

But this issue – What does the Lord require? – is not one affected by opinions about the science, climate-change-scepticism, new technologies or debates about the effectiveness of one philosophy or another. For Christians this issue is about conversion. Let's just say it – are we converted to Christ or not? If we are his disciples then we believe that our Christian commitment requires us to join God at work in his Creation, to be in fact co-creators with him. Then we can straight forwardly unpack Micah's proclamation. What



does it mean to do justice, and to love mercy, and walk humbly with God?

It means we are required to become SUBVERSIVE FOOLS. We too must challenge the systems and authorities which perpetuate injustice and powerlessness. In our times, as in many eras before us, subversive, is a Christian word. We are required to subvert and resist the systems which bleed the poor and feed the rich; the systems which exploit the earth's resources and systematically from day one to day seven de-create the earth.

In this *Green Christian* Sam Norton starts us off by helping us to think theologically about the end of the economic growth culture (p4).

A coalition of agencies remind us to take part in the coming election and ask the Climate Question (p.6) and Stewart Hemsley challenges us to take our prayer and witness into the streets (p.10) and Miriam Pepper points directly to the action of Jesus as inspiration for her direct action.

In view of the previously-recorded facts about the rapidly reducing biodiversity of the earth Roy Tindle invites us to celebrate the fragile web of life, walking humbly with our God (p.12).

It's a simple enough question. "What does the Lord require of you?"

Our hope and desire is that this issue of *Green Christian* and all Christian Ecology Links' activities and resources will help us all come together in the Lord's name and answer the question in worship, action and prayer.

The facts and figures given here come from the *Earth from the Air Diary 2005 and 2010* by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, published by Wecomunic8 Ltd www.earthfromtheair.com ■