

does make occasional reference to what might have been read as 'scripture' at their 'services'. In the final chapter (ch. 5), however, there is once again some quality, though not necessarily convincing, material with regard to the relationship between John the Elder (*ho presbyteros*) and 'the Beloved Disciple'. It hardly redeems the work, however.

Along with the generally unsatisfactory presentation of the author's material a few niggling points continuously add to the oppression. Why, for example, throughout the text, are nearly, though *not quite all*, the numerous Greek quotations transliterated into Roman (Italic actually), whereas for the most part (but again not always) throughout the footnotes they are presented in Greek script? Why does the author consistently use CE rather than AD in all his dates? Is it a hang-over from his being Professor of Early Judaism as well as New Testament (irrelevant with regard to the present work, I should have thought), or is he trying to be 'modernist and progressive' (something which he fairly frequently criticises in others) in relation to the fact that Jesus was probably born about or even earlier than BC 5 (or should I, to be pedantic, say 5 BCE)? In the attempt by a committed Christian to determine the nature of the living presence of the risen Christ within the Church, roughly between AD 60 and 150, it produces, to the present writer's mind, an extraordinarily discordant effect, though one not out of character with so much of the way in which this work is presented.

An altogether far from satisfactory contribution to Johannine studies.

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REASON, RELIGION AND THE ANIMALS by Basil Wrighton. *Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare*. 1987. Pp. 101. Available from CSCAW, c/o Mrs M. Bocking, 39 Onslow Gardens, South Woodford, London E18 1ND.

Father Basil Wrighton was a parish priest who spent most of his life in Staffordshire and Oxfordshire, retiring in 1976 to Hendred House, where he was given a flat and use of the Eyston family's 13th century chapel in which he celebrated Holy Mass daily until his death in 1988 at the age of 88. He had a working knowledge of 15–20 languages, was steeped in classical learning and wrote, over more than half a century, scores of articles for many Catholic journals, some defunct, some still published. These include articles on Christian philosophy and theology, on Kierkegaard and Newman, on Eastern religion, on modernism, and many pieces on the rights of animals. These latter, most of which have already appeared in *The Ark*, the magazine of CSCAW, have recently been collected and published as a single volume.

Such a volume is greatly to be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the hardly-explored intellectual territory of Christian philosophy concerning the rights of God's nonhuman creatures. Fr. Wrighton expresses his debt to the earlier work of Dom Ambrose Agius, and many of us are familiar with the recent work of the Anglican theologian Andrew Linzey. But there is much to be done, especially by Catholic thinkers, in systematising the philosophy of animal rights (or of our moral obligations toward animals, if rights talk be objected to). In *Reason, Religion and the Animals* we have Fr. Wrighton's chief writings on the subject arranged in chronological order, beginning with his 1950 piece 'The True Civilization', in which he laments

the disappearance from the modern world of 'the mystic vision of the saints', notably St. Francis, whose civilizing influence can counteract the persecution of animals daily carried out in the name of pleasure and elegance (eg. hunting and fur-wearing), but especially in the name of scientific curiosity where, 'ignoring the patent facts of a physical and nervous organisation substantially similar to his (the scientist's) own, he can ... condemn helpless and guileless fellow-creatures, living and breathing and loving like himself, to the last extremities of torture and mutilation ...'.

Moving through the chapters, one finds Fr. Wrighton concentrating less and less on hunting, fur-trapping and other abuses of animals for amusement and profit—such activities tending to diminish over the years in the face of their increasingly apparent unjustifiability—and more on scientific (especially medical) research on animals, ever increasing and ever difficult effectively to criticise in the eyes of a public confronted daily with tragic stories of human suffering. The recurring themes of Fr. Wrighton's essays are, first, that as a general principle animals have moral rights, and that these rights require of us, as trustees of Creation, *respect* for animals. This does not involve a downgrading of the status of humans, because 'the demand is greatest for our species, but it extends to the others too in proportion to their nearness to us.' What rights to ascribe to which animals is largely an empirical matter: we have a duty to inform ourselves of the qualities and capacities of animals and to ascribe rights on the basis of those qualities and capacities which we humans typically possess as well and in virtue of which we have rights. Interhuman morality is thus the paradigm by which we judge of the rights of God's other creatures, to be recognised according to their natures (both as individuals and as members of kinds).

Another of Fr. Wrighton's principal concerns is 'that a good and merciful God, such as we believe in, cannot conceivably have so arranged things that necessary knowledge (scientific, especially medical) can only come to man through the infliction of merciless cruelties on His other sensitive creatures.' There *must* be, and are increasingly revealed to be, other, more humane types of research whereby the same beneficial knowledge can be acquired. (Some incidental, pure knowledge will probably not be available, but '(n)ot all knowledge is good or desirable. There are things which we *ought not* to know...'.) He does not concentrate on the ineffectiveness and positive danger to humans of animal experimentation, for that would be to concede too much to the scientists (such information is, however, readily available); Fr. Wrighton's point is always the ethical one, that '(o)ur spiritual mentors on the other hand, the representatives of the Church, are primarily concerned with morality, and cannot for one moment admit that a good end can justify evil means, or even doubtful means.' Hence the Principle of Double Effect must be respected: 'We must be utterly uncompromising here, for vivisection is a deliberate choice to do evil in furtherance of one's aims: and that is a thing which *nothing* can justify or excuse.' Without this principle all morality would collapse into a morass of pernicious and muddled utilitarian thinking. Thus animal experimentation can never be justified where the experiment involves an intrinsic evil, i.e. the violation of the properly recognised rights of God's other creatures. And to the extent that carnivorousness can be shown to be typically unnecessary for the physical survival of the human

being (and it can, hard imaginary cases aside), vegetarianism is one part of our total obligation of respect for nonhuman creatures. In later chapters Fr. Wrighton is less inclined to see such respect as a matter of heroic virtue, something we, as aspiring saints, should strive to achieve, but as one of simple, common morality, as part of the essence of the moral law, which we violate at our peril.

Scholastic philosophy, Fr. Wrighton points out, was notoriously deficient in its attitude to animals, inheriting from Aristotle a type of utilitarian thinking toward them from which it has never been able to rid itself, and which has always sat paradoxically in what is otherwise a system of natural law binding humans. And on a practical level Christians have, for many centuries, 'swum with the social tide. They have become more and more deeply involved and compromised with the unbelieving world of science and politics, so that they find it extremely difficult to cut themselves loose and regain their freedom of mind and conscience.' Theologians, says Fr. Wrighton, 'have encouraged this conformity and have themselves indulged in dogmatic slumber when they ought to have been up and sounding the alarm.' It is up to Christians to reconquer the moral high ground by opening their eyes to the natural world around them and bringing within their sphere of compassion their fellow creatures who have been placed on this planet as part of the divine plan. Compassion does not mean simply feeding one's neighbour's dog while he is on holiday, it means waking up to the living hell which exists in this nation's (and the world's) laboratories and slaughterhouses for countless millions of suffering beings, and putting a stop to it.

Reading through Fr. Wrighton's essays one recognises the prescience of his thought, the prophetic nature of his moral awareness. Thirty years before the utilitarians had even begun seriously to investigate the facts and moral principles behind our treatment of animals, he was trenchantly criticising our practices and the spurious values underlying them. He employs terminology which has only recently become part of popular usage, railing against 'factory farming', 'reproduction by test-tube methods', 'social engineering', and the theological mistake of treating God's grant to us of dominion over nature as one not of stewardship but of ownership. The pages of this gem-like collection are full of sparkling writing, memorable passages and fascinating excursions, in particular a brilliant examination of the place of animals in the other major religions. The book ends with pieces written in the 1960's, rounded off by a witty but terse litany of properties belonging to the so-called 'crackpot', for instance: 'A crackpot is one who respects the life that comes from God even though it is not his own life or that of his own species'; 'A crackpot is one who rates his moral instincts higher than material gain, the dictates of fashion, or even the sacred name of Science.' Despite the elegance of Fr. Wrighton's prose one is, however, always aware of the foreboding inherent in his reflections, involving a scenario which would be laughable were it not so plausible (see the experiments of Robert White, reported in *New Blackfriars*, May 1969): 'Perhaps when science has advanced a bit further and human bodies are walking around with other people's heads and the characters of synthetic devils, the moralists will wake up and call for a halt—if there are any moralists left.' These essays are compulsory reading for those who wish to avert this fast-approaching catastrophe.

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